to Salang Pass. This was a long, steep mountain drive through one of the longest mountain tunnels I have ever driven. Ali's family had never been outside of Kabul. The day was beautiful; not only the weather, but the whole experience. We learned a different way to build a fire and how to roast kabobs over an open flame. And, of course, we had some of Ali's good cupcakes and hot coffee brewed over an open fire. To see his three younger children enjoying the long ride and their polite behavior is something we still talk about.

Remembering and re-living these experiences as we talked during those days of packing up to leave, I thought about the changes. Who changed? Was it I who changed or was it the Afghans? At first, when I thought about teaching a selected group of Afghans to write curriculum materials, I combed through my experience and principles which I knew were true because I had seen them work--not just a few but hundreds of times. At first it seemed to me that I must teach these Afghans the principles which govern good teaching and make the principles part of themselves, just as they had become a part of me. But as days, weeks, months, and years progressed, the lessons began to teach me. I found that for good performance we had to be one thing. One organ. Intellectually, the counterparts had to be near each other and near their culture. Gradually, the Afghans became a part of me, I a part of them. Education, as normally practiced throughout the world, sometimes ignores this principle. By recognizing and even welcoming their cultural interests and patterns for living, I was preparing the foundation for the "organic" method of teaching. The counterparts' interests were allowed expression and, at the same time, were moulded into patterns of constructive usefulness, the kind that eventually turned out to be useful to hundreds of children and teachers all over Afghanistan.

XIV.

RE-ENTRY INTO THE STATES

It was 9:23 p.m. when we touched down on the Kennedy Airport runway, November 21, 1971. A little over two years ago Mother and I had lifted off this same runway headed for the greatest venture of our lives. My feeling now, as I stepped off the TWA 747, was not the same as when I boarded the Pan American aircraft two years previous. There were pangs of anxiety. I wondered: Would New York, Chicago, and Wichita be the same? Nothing remains the same. I was not the same. Mother was not the same. How could I expect the United States to be the same? All of the material in this book--set down as documents, journals, and memory made possible--has become an integral part of me. Even if conditions in the States remained the same, my home town, family, and friends would not seem the same.

Putting the Project experience together, re-living it all again, I find it hard to remember exactly how it really did feel to connect again with my culture. For a considerable time after my return to the States, I was still living, as it were, in Kabul, in the office on the Fourth Floor, in the schools seeing children's faces light up when a new story was introduced. The TCCU Office of International Studies on the Columbia campus here in New York had left word at the hotel desk that I was to check in with them the next morning to report briefly on happenings and impressions. I remember vividly my impression as the taxi pulled up to The King's Crown Hotel near Columbia University. The driver stepped out of the cab, opened

the trunk, got out our bags, set them on the curb, took the fare and tip, and drove off. I left Mother to guard the luggage and entered the hotel to complain about the inadequate service. "Ma'am, have you not heard of women's lib?" was the only answer given. I carried the bags into the lobby myself. At least I didn't have to tip anybody! I thought about how different from Kabul.... At that airport there were at least three "toters" for every bag. I said to Mother, "We are not in Afghanistan any more."

Mr. Obydi and Mr. Amousgar, Afghan members of the Textbook Project and now in New York studying at the University, came by our hotel the next day to greet us. They had just recently arrived on a one-year scholarship to further their training in curriculum development. I don't remember who was the happier to meet, we or they. But from my feeling I knew what those two years in Afghanistan did to me. Already I was homesick for the Afghan people. This meeting in New York put something together for both the Afghans and me. I talked about Kabul. They talked about New York. I couldn't think of a single apt thing to say to them about the United States. I, too, needed to be oriented to the way Americans live.

Wichita airport was next. It was pouring rain when we touched down on the Kansas airstrip. The score of friends and family members at the gate to welcome us home brought back the feeling that here is the place where I belong. The next few months were busy, settling into routines which fit the culture here. Giving speeches about the land, the people, and the Project gave me the opportunity to re-live Afghanistan even while adjusting and getting used to the American way and pace of living. I thought about the problem that is every teacher's problem--here, there,

and everywhere: How to initiate children into new experiences without deforming their spirits. The extraordinary scheme of Organic Teaching is as important in the United States as it is in Afghanistan.

Thinking about it now, I can see wonders in the past that I had not realized when I first began working in Afghanistan. I remember how much time I spent talking to my counterparts. Endlessly through those beginning days I sat in the office on the Fourth Floor discussing, working things out--fine points, big issues, school expectations, problems of educating children with little to work with. I didn't realize then what I was doing when I asked and asked and asked about things. Why this and why that? But I know now that the answers to my questions, when integrated and espoused to good teaching principles, were what led to a plan of action. But the material we worked with had to be drawn from the Afghans. This became the bridge that connected the known to the unknown; universally speaking, from the inner man out. Our first attempts of writing curriculum material had little in common with the standard, well-organized sequences, but from this beginning a truly indigenous foundation was being laid. Organic teaching is not new; it is the rejection of it that is new. Organic teaching will bring joy to everyone everywhere who is concerned with helping children grow into literate adults.

People everywhere have two visions, the inner and the outer. Of the two, the inner vision is the brighter. I discovered in Afghanistan how much was locked inside. I had to draw it out. And I did it by asking questions rather than by telling answers. What an exciting discovery!

I looked forward to a semester at George Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. Hesston College agreed to give me the sabbatical which had been interrupted by my call to Afghanistan. George Peabody

renewed the invitation of 1969--to enroll for the spring semester of 1972 as a post-doctoral fellow. I had freedom to audit classes and use the libraries at both Peabody and Vanderbilt Universities. I needed this kind of experience to connect again with the academic world. The Dean at Hesston College in Kansas also kept in touch with me during that semester, informing me of developments on the Hesston campus. That semester my belief in the organic approach to teaching grew, and I became more and more convinced that we had followed the right procedure for developing curriculum materials in Afghanistan.

The fall semester at Hesston College began in September of 1972. I was ready to teach again.

XV.

CROSSROADS OF THE AGES

Because Afghanistan has not been an every-morning headline in the newspapers, it is difficult for some people to understand what is happening there today. Most people's historical perspective is short, and it is especially short in this Middle East area. But for the people of Afghanistan, the present crisis is not unusual. They have been in crises before.

Afghanistan is an old, old nation. It was an organized society when Alexander the Great came marching through in 330 B.C. on his way to India. It seems that everybody who was anybody in the history books had marched over the very ground Kabul city is built on.

The Kabul area has witnessed the coming and passing of many great empires during its long history. The Kabul valley was part of the empire of King Darius about 520 B.C. Zoroaster and Buddha are other names that run through Afghanistan's history. A long procession of nomadic or ex-nomadic migrant peoples have passed through Afghanistan from Central Asia enroute to the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent. The Aryans, who passed through the country some 2,000 years before Christ, brought the Sanskrit language to India. A swarm of Iranian-speaking invaders who occupied the Helmund River basin in 700 B.C. deserves mention because one of the tribes bore the name Pactyike, according to the Ancient Greek historian Herodotus. Some historians believe that the name may be identical with

the present-day name Pakhtuns (alias Pathans).[1] The Pathans today are established in the Helmund River basin.

Whatever that date may have been, there is no question that the Pathans are a dominant people and it is they who are generally thought of as the "real Afghans." The major language of Afghanistan is Pashtu and is no doubt derived from the Pakhtun tribe.

In 656 A.D. Kabul was captured by the Arabs who first introduced Islam to the region. Genghis Kahn in 1200 A.D. and Marco Polo in 1300 A.D. were other names with power using the country as a land to pass through on the way to India leaving a trail of blood as they passed.

Afghanistan was already a country hundreds of years before Columbus was born. But somewhere through the centuries the nation stopped evolving. During the 19th century Kabul was in a constant state of turmoil caused by internal strife over the quartering of a British garrison, resulting in two Anglo-Afghan wars, 1879-1880. Order was at last restored during the reign of Amur Abdur Rahman, who ascended the throne in 1880.

Kabul was once again in turmoil in 1929 when the masses revolted against the modernization plans of King Amanullah, resulting in his abdication. For several months Afghanistan was ruled by a usurper who terrorized the city. He was defeated in 1929 by General Mohammad Nadir Kahn, who was later elected king. During the guidance of this king, 1929-1933, and his successor Mohammad Zahir Shah, 1934-1972, Afghanistan experienced unparalleled prosperity and development.

In 1972, the 38-year reign of Zahir Shah was ended by a military coup replacing the king with a president, Mohammad Daoud. An internal

---

[1]Arnold J. Toynbee, Between Oxus and Jumna (London, 1961).

power struggle narrowed this new government's political base which was concentrated in a tiny urban and military elite. Daoud's government lasted but a short time.

So, if this, in condensed form, is Afghanistan's history, what of the present? What is the state of the country's present governmental leadership? In April 1978, the second military coup took over the government, replacing Daoud with a new president, Noor Mohammad Taraki, who installed a strict, pro-communist government. Harshness appeared to be the rule in Afghanistan. The new Taraki government admitted that it was being vigilant. Reports revealed that searchlights came on every evening, surveying the city and the rocky brown mountains surrounding it. All night lights played across thousands of windows, flashing like summer lightning until dawn finally brought the end of the curfew and the first call to prayer. Officially, it was explained that the guards were looking for counter-revolutionaries. But many residents ridiculed that explanation and saw the lights as a symbol of the harsh new order that had descended upon Afghanistan.

"You can't call it fear exactly," reported a foreign diplomat with long experience in this rugged and starkly beautiful land of 13 million people. "Afghans are too tough and proud to be fearful. It may be more like caution than resignation. Afghans see what happens if you speak out so they won't. Citizens fear 'Big Brother.'"[2]

It was reported that a college student who had refused to go to a pro-government rally was dragged out of his history class by police and was not seen again. Other reports reveal that one day in August 1978,

---

[2]Craig Whitney, "Afghans Sign Agreement with Soviets," The New York Times Service, published in the Wichita Eagle, December 5, 1978.

four months after the second Communist take-over, a startled United Nationss official from Sweden waited in the outer office of the Minister of Planning and was hustled away to jail and charged with plotting a counter-coup. There is speculation about whether he is still alive. Foreign diplomats, eager to maintain their contacts with the government, tried hard to ignore this repression. Said one diplomat: "It is hard to ignore the guns that have become a regular feature of the official scene."[3]

Of course, guns have been a part of the way of life in Afghanistan for as long as anyone can remember, and so has a rigid police-state government.

What is there about this country that has made it so often the object of attack?

Afghanistan has a 1,000-mile border with the Soviet Union and traditionally has been heavily dependent on it for trade, economic aid, and military support. The government under Taraki had vowed to remain unofficially non-aligned. But on December 5, 1978, Afghanistan moved firmly into the orbit of the Soviet Union with a 20-year treaty of friendship and cooperation that gives it close economic and military ties with Moscow. This shift in the balance of forces in this sensitive Central Asian region has aroused concern among the free countries. The Soviet treaty with Afghanistan is the seventh such agreement the Soviets have made with underdeveloped countries in recent years. The others are Angola, Mozambique, Iran, India, Vietnam, and Ethiopia.

---

[3]Whitney, op. cit.

The area of Afghanistan is approximately 250,000 square miles, about the size of Texas, but its total population is roughly the same as Tokyo. I say "roughly" because no comprehensive census has ever been made, and estimates vary widely--between ten and fifteen million. The nomad population has been estimated at about two million, but it may be larger. One reason for this great disparity between land area and population is, of course, that about half the country is composed of either high mountains or deserts--both unfit for habitation.

One might ask how such people on such land with such history established themselves into such an independent nation. But a far more important question, it seems to me, is to ask: How can the vitality that enabled the Afghan people to survive throughout the centuries under appallingly hard conditions be renewed and preserved? I believe that the present government, be it communist, democratic, or autocratic, will have to find some way to foster this people's ancient virtues of independence and self-reliance.

The future, due to steady modernization made possible by placing emphasis on education, promises much for the Afghans. Raising the national literacy rate is a reasonable effort. Who knows, Afghanistan may once again become an important crossroads of civilization.

importance of something that resembles home, for this facility was all I needed to quiet my pulse. I relaxed for the first time since leaving the plane.

Even my anxiety over the fact that our five pieces of luggage were not on our plane subsided. We could get along wearing what we had on in this lovely home, completely furnished, even to the point of having "eatables" stocked in the refrigerator.

Mildred, bless her heart, knew what quiets a stranger in a strange land. I think she thought of everything, even the welcoming parties arranged for us during the next several days. She was a firm believer that new arrivals must be kept busy, comfortable, secure, and welcome in those first days. I was most grateful to her.

XVI.

COUNTERPARTS TO STATES FOR FURTHER TRAINING

"Train them to do it so that they can carry on after you leave. Don't do it for them." These were the words, the phrases, the spoken choice bits of admonition given me by several USAID and TCCU officials during orientation days shortly after my arrival in 1969. And again, as I bade them all farewell at the Kabul airport and walked toward the plane that would carry me forever (I was afraid) from the people and the arena that had made this experience the greatest of my life, I turned the words over again in my mind: "Train them to do it. Don't do it for them." And I remember my thoughts as the Ariana jet aircraft lifted off the Afghanistan runway: "I know they can. I know they will."

That was in October 1971. But as the weeks, months, and years passed, I wondered if the stories were still being written. Were the artists, typists, printers, and reviewing committees still keeping up with the schedule? How could I know? Was it necessary that I know how they were "getting on"? It wasn't until January 1973, more than a year after my departure, that I found out "how they got on."

A letter from Mr. Wardak posted in Buffalo, New York, was evidence that they were keeping up with the schedule. Before I left Kabul, a tentative schedule of a leave of absence for Mr. Wardak was drawn up and would be made valid only on the condition that he could be spared

from duties in the Project. The year tentatively set was 1973. Mr. Wardak had previously earned a master's degree from New York University in Buffalo, and it was his choice to return to Buffalo to continue studies toward the doctoral degree. When I left Kabul in 1971, I doubted that the Project could spare him by 1973. There were many heavy deadlines to meet in order to keep teachers supplied with the new materials. The research department was concerned about keeping the experimental classrooms going so that they could compare reading achievement scores with the control classrooms. Evidently the force on Fourth Floor were meeting the deadlines because Mr. Wardak was truly in Buffalo and it was 1973. He was there on a USAID scholarship to further his education in curriculum development, specializing in Language Arts. The letter told me that he was registered for the spring semester at New York University in Buffalo. Furthermore, he asked whether I would meet him at the Wichita airport (complete flight information given). He said he had a week of free time before classes were to begin. A telephone call from the Office of International Services, Teachers College, Columbia University, came about the same time asking whether I would be host to Mr. Wardak for a week and provide for him an educational experience relating to his major interests.

What a breakthrough this was for me! When I saw Mr. Wardak come through that line of passengers who had just arrived in the Wichita airport, suddenly two years of activities flooded my mind. Seeing Mr. Wardak made it seem as though I was there, in Kabul, in that world of which I needed to know how "they got on." During that week, he told me and showed me the stories, the lesson plans, the teacher's guides

which the team had written and placed in the third grades of the experimental schools. He related, in detail, their experiences with the Review Committee and authority figures both in the Ministry of Education and in the village schools where the new material was being tried. Mr. Wardak wasn't afraid to reveal the difficult experience with the Review Committee where problems, grievances, and biases were hashed out. He said to me, "Consensus-type thinking is still just as difficult to achieve as it was when you were there. Some of the meetings had to be extended into the next and the next and even the next week."

I laughed. I understood exactly. The system of "committee review" was indeed a slow and tedious process; but, we agreed, the system did provide opportunity to air problems and complaints. At the same time, it clued in members of the Language Arts Division on important traditions and concerns. Mr. Wardak said that questions of suitability were still being jostled with personal likes and dislikes. There was always the question of whether a particular story would appeal to the power structure. "Very rarely," Mr. Wardak said, "did committee members think about the story's appeal to children."

There were places to go, people to meet, schools to visit during Mr. Wardak's week in Kansas. We followed a schedule of events faithfully that week. Not all of our conversation hovered around the Project, but it was difficult to keep off the subject for very long. My questions, most of them, were answered. By the end of the week, I was pleased and thoroughly convinced that the people who worked in the various divisions of the Curriculum-Textbook Project were preparing materials that "worked

for them." I remember saying to Mr. Wardak as I took him to the airport a week later, "You know, the very thought of heightening the consciousness of a country is staggering, and it stands to reason that any progress is painfully slow."

His response to that was, "No one knows better than I. Our effort to put an idealistic scheme into practical operation would not be difficult if there were but one person to please; but when there are twenty-five of them, all with their own views and interests, the product is hard to hold within the framework of respectable and consistent principles." I understood what he meant. He was referring to the committee system which clogged and slowed the process, making deadlines difficult to meet.

The thought that came across to me more and more forcibly after the Wardak visit was that although the odds against their efforts seemed enormous, the Afghans were gradually and surely improving their working arrangements and were learning how to cope with disagreements and to arrive at acceptable conclusions. At the Ministry of Education final decisions pertaining to curriculum had to be made by the Steering Committee and the Education Council. They were moving in the right direction. And they were "doing it themselves."

Mr. Najand and Mr. Tarin were the next to visit me. It was a year later, 1974, that the New York office called, asking whether I would work out another schedule of school observations and miscellaneous activities. Najand and Tarin were given USAID stipends to tour the United States observing various kinds of educational systems. Given a six-month leave from the Ministry, they were to spend approximately

three weeks at each designated location. Hesston was one of these locations. Again, I was brought up to date with the Project in Afghanistan. Their three-week stay passed quickly.. How they had grown in their understanding of educational theory! They asked questions and were not satisfied until they could arrive at applications reasonable to their own culture. They sought out practices that were applicable to Afghanistan. The next locations were Texas, then California, and back to Greeley, Colorado, where they enrolled in classes at the State Teachers College. They knew by now that schools in America are not all alike.

There followed in the next two years, 1975 and 1976, two more visits from Afghans. In 1975, Mr. Alimi, the last of my counterparts to be granted a scholarship, was sent to the States. Boston University was selected as the place for him to study. He had recently graduated from the University of Kabul and had good command of the English language. I knew he would do well; language proficiency would be an asset. As for the previous counterparts, I outlined a schedule of activities during his visit to Kansas. I remember how well he got along with a fourth-grade class in the Hesston Public School. The children were shown on the blackboard how to write their names in Farsi. Such interest was aroused that they kept him occupied the entire period answering their questions. That evening I took him along to a carry-in dinner party on a farm in the country. The owner of the farm took Mr. Alimi for a ride on his big tractor which had an air-conditioned cab. He demonstrated the radio which could put him in touch with other tractors in the same field, and even connect him

with his wife in the house. When the farmer told Mr. Alimi that his wife sometimes was the "hired man" on the other tractor, it made an impression. And after he met the farmer's wife, Mr. Alimi asked, "How can she work in the field and look so beautiful? In my country it would be difficult." And indeed it would. Farming procedures in the two countries were hardly comparable.

The last one to visit me in Kansas was Mr. Rahimi, who was the chief editor of all the materials being developed by the Project, not only the work of the Language Arts Division, but also the work of the Science, Social Studies, Health, Mathematics, and Research Divisions. I was eager to hear Mr. Rahimi's report, for it was now 1976 and four years since I had left the Project. In spite of two military coups, which upset the existing organizational structures and replaced governmental leadership with new leaders, the work on the Project went on. The pace was considerably slowed down at times, as it became necessary to change the pattern of organization in the various divisions. Some of the counterparts were given new responsibilities. New people were added to the department as materials became ready for final printing. Mr. McMakin's publication department probably exhibited the greatest change. When Mr. Rahimi handed me the books for the first and second grades and told me that these books were now distributed throughout the entire country and that the Research Division was bringing back good reports from their extensive study on the effect of the new textbooks, I applauded their effort. "It wasn't easy," Mr. Rahimi said, "and deadlines were altered, even scrapped for a spell." I told him that it's a wonder not more were scrapped, considering the unpredictable

situation. The Rahimi visit confirmed my appraisal of the Afghan people, at least those whom I had learned to know.

Mr. Wardak, after his 1973 visit to Kansas, came to Kansas again in the fall of 1977. He was again studying at New York University at Buffalo and was nearing the completion of his doctoral dissertation. He brought it for me to read, the subject being one he thought might be of interest to me: "Changing Language Arts Curriculum in Afghanistan Public School System."

In the curriculum and textbook work of the Department of Publications, the constant improvement of staff is the key for future development. The most important growth is probably through the day-by-day experience on the job, but the effect of the current participant-training programs (counterparts' study and experiences abroad) was becoming evident. According to Mr. Rahimi's observation, the work of the Department is increasingly based on competencies developed through the Studies Abroad Program. By the time of his visit, sixteen authors and researchers had returned from studies abroad and had put their know-how to work on the Project. "Three of those who have returned recently," Mr. Rahimi told me, "have been assigned by the Ministry to administrative positions." This is inevitable. It was Mr. Alimi who told me that one of our Language Arts counterparts, who worked closely with the Team in textbook utilization in the early 1970s, is now Vice President of Primary Education.

In spite of frequent revolutionary upsets in Afghanistan, these professionally prepared teachers will constitute the nucleus of a staff which should be able to carry on curriculum development and textbook production in Afghanistan in the years ahead.

XVII.

HALA CHIY GAP AST? (WHAT'S GOING ON NOW?)

[STATUS OF THE PROJECT TEN YEARS LATER]

Social institutions, particularly political ones, are first to feel the impact of new ideas and ways of implementing them, and are often the first to react. Pressures and strains on institutions are particularly severe when people who have suffered oppression begin to see the opportunity for a better life. Certain Afghans who became an integral part of the Textbook Project hoped that the grip of traditional illiteracy would eventually be broken and their people experience a way of living commensurate with their aspirations. But the institutions that were to help them realize these aspirations changed. And in the last ten years, change in Afghanistan came at what seemed to be race-horse speed.

Reality of the progress and the problems of the Afghan people in striving toward literacy is inconceivably dismal when the facts, since 1973, reveal that the nation has experienced nothing but change and turmoil. The radical change began when their Moslem king, Mohammed Zahir Shah, was overthrown by his brother-in-law. Five years later, the brother-in-law was ousted in a Soviet-backed Marxist coup. Then, in just a little over a year, this communist government, under Noor Mohammed Taraki, came under a new attack by Moslem and tribal rebels and Taraki

was replaced by another Marxist, Hafizulla Amin. This leader lasted less than two months. In December 1979 the Soviets placed their own leader, Babrok Karmal, in Afghanistan, to organize a government which the Communists could completely control.

It is a critical moment for the Afghan people, and indeed critical for those in education who are trying to keep schools in Afghanistan open. I am overwhelmed as I think of the difficulties confronting teachers and administrators in the schools. How can anyone expect reading to be taught in these discouraging situations?

And yet, communication received from the area gives reason to believe that some schools are kept open and are operating. Teachers are trying to cope with the situation. A letter from Mr. Wardak in Kabul, received on October 12, 1979, describes the responsibility delegated to him by the Ministry of Education in Kabul:

> My work is in the schools with teachers and children. Last year I had workshops and seminars with the 1,100 teachers and about 40,000 children in ninety schools--in the morning with children in the classroom and in the afternoon, with teachers of grades one, two, and three. During the winter term, 1979, I worked with about 300 teachers in seminars across the country helping them to get acquainted with the new curriculum. I stay at each place about ten days. I help teachers know about teaching and about learning.
>
> The Department of Education at the Ministry knows that my work is needed for our Democratic Republic. Our people are trying to bring literacy to both children and adults. I am a member of a committee for one of the areas around Kabul. In each area, teachers ask for help. My work doesn't need promoting. I do not need to urge teachers to get help. They are always asking for help. I like my work and do not want a position in the office. I am helping teachers and children who need help.

That letter was written to me on September 30, 1979. I have not heard from him since the later government leadership change. The press releases have not shown that the new leader has established a stable government. But there is every reason to hope that when the political

situation is settled and the people are allowed to conduct education in ways that meet their goals and intentions, schools will be open for business and children will learn to read, write, and "figure" (their term for mathematical calculations).

The road to literacy for children and adults may vary, depending upon political movements in the present and in the future. In any event, education for self-reliance would seem a worthy goal for any developing country. The contribution of the Afghan educator who can lead children through the "learning to read" stage on to the "reading to learn" stage is certainly to be applauded. The teacher's effort in promoting literacy should continue to be emphasized not only for achieving national goals but also for enhancing the personal well-being of every Afghan citizen.

Given time, the children in Afghanistan should be properly equipped to do "their own thing" in matters pertaining to reading. As with any major change (and Afghanistan has had more than its share), there is conflict, struggle, and far too often, violence. But the time is always right to try, and there are indications that they are trying. Afghans, because of their long history of hardship and struggle, do not expect good things instantly. They are accustomed to leaders who exploit, leaders lustful for power, leaders caught in their own vanity or emotional instability. They are accustomed to violence, an unfortunate result of unstable and short-lived governments. But no society can endure and progress in constant and destructive tumult. I believe the time will come when the full weight of the destiny of Afghanistan will be felt, and its people will establish peace. It will take time, and it appears that the people are not wasting time. Nobody said it was going to be easy.

III.

PROTOCOL IS IMPORTANT

I awoke the next morning not at all sure where I was. But when I looked out of the upstairs window and saw the Hindu Kush Mountain Range in the distance with the sun just barely visible and casting a pink hue over its snowcapped ridge, I knew the place was not Kansas. This morning (and as I later learned, every morning) was announced by the Islamic call to prayer. Afghan men (most of them devout Moslems) met regularly in the mosques throughout the city for early morning prayers. Mildred had said when she left the night before that I need not rush this first morning. She knew about jet-lag. I am sure she was aware of the adjustment that new arrivals have to make in a 6,000-foot altitude. Mildred arranged the schedule of the next week's social calls, teas, and welcoming parties with generous spaces between.

I had already met part of the TCCU Team on the afternoon of our arrival. A welcome "coffee" was served in the beautiful backyard of Jim Canfield, social studies specialist of the Project. How could I remember all those names! New names and new faces! Mildred said there would be more occasions like this one to get acquainted.

And there were. My social calendar already looked fuller than any calendar I had ever kept. There was a tea on Monday at the Ericsons. Betty called to say that she would pick me up at two o'clock. Wednesday was the

luncheon at Mildred's. Thursday was the Stakers' turn. Theirs was a dinner. Friday, a luncheon at the Spearmans.

Mildred knew that I would know all their names after this week of entertainment. I had now met the whole Columbia Team and their spouses often enough to hold first-name acquaintance. The homes of the Americans were beautiful, each with its own individual blend of American and Afghan decor. Conversation flowed easily and naturally around the spectacular bargains to be found in the bazaars. Some of the most spectacular were found in Peshawar, they said.

Where is Peshawar, I wondered. All of them seemed to take it for granted that everyone knew about the wonders of Peshawar in Pakistan. Mildred said that she would take me there sometime. She said I would learn the tricks of bargaining, too. I had heard so much about the valuable "finds" in Peshawar, and if I ever went there I expected to see no less than the palace of Aladdin all set with jasper, agate, and other precious stones. Three weeks later Mildred took me there. I was not quite prepared for the shock. There was no Palace of Aladdin. The bazaars, rows and rows of them, were not bordered in precious stones. But I saw beautiful brass pitchers, brass plates, brass candleholders, decorative tea sets, beautiful china cups, and plaited, woven straw baskets and Persian rugs. The value of the things had to grow on me and I felt unprepared to buy, much less to bargain with the merchants. I did, however, stand and stare long at a beautiful brass shield with a wooden knocker.

"Chand afghaniy?" ("How much money?") I heard Mildred asking. The merchant told her the amount, and before I could run through the several Farsi phrases I had previously memorized in preparation for this moment and

say, "Qimat bisyar ast" ("It's too expensive"), the merchant had the brass shield already wrapped in newspaper. As he handed it to me, he said "Khub ast. Tashakor" ("It's good. Thank you"). I was not thankful then, but I have been thankful since, because it was the beginning of many purchases, not only that day in Peshawar but in subsequent visits to the bazaars in Kabul and other cities and villages of Afghanistan. Bargaining skill improved with each purchase, but I could never feel altogether comfortable doing it. My cook in Kabul used the brass shield to call me to meals every day; and in my home in Kansas the brass shield occupies a prominent place on a shelf.

Between teas and receptions, I was taken on tours of the USAID Compound--a sprawling complex consisting of the American commissary, the hospital, the post office, the truck repair shop, the money exchange headquarters, and the American Wives' Association Thrift Shop. Officials in charge of all the above services needed to meet the new arrivals and properly register their names before rights and privileges of the services could be granted. I signed my name on what seemed to me to be hundreds of forms handed out by each of the service heads. But prior to the signing, each Head or assistant to the Head explained in detail the privileges as well as the obligations accompanying these rights and privileges. I was impressed. USAID truly provides for persons called to this Tour of Duty. Both Dr. Martin, Education Director, and Dr. McClure, Director General of USAID, reminded me several times that Afghanistan is considered to be a "Hardship Post" and it is for this reason that these particular services are provided.

When Mildred took me to the AID warehouse where extra furniture and appliances are kept in storage and where bolts and bolts of drapery and

upholstery material are stacked on shelves, I began to understand what she meant when she earlier explained to me about the AID service. "Now, if for any reason you are not pleased with the furniture and interior decoration of your home in Kabul, you may take along the sample books and choose the kind of drapery and upholstery material you would rather have. The Compound has hired Afghan artisans who will redecorate your home to your complete satisfaction."

I thought of the house assigned to me in Karte Seh and could not think of one thing I wanted changed, inside or out. It was true, however, that our home was not as distinguished as many I had been in during the week of socializing. Ours was less flamboyant than many of the others in that area. And after U. S. Ambassador Newmann's reception for all new arrivals, I knew ours to be exceptionally ordinary. But I liked our home. It was just right for Mother and me.

Sleep was not easy that night. I was overtired from the long day of meeting and being met. There was a lot to remember. People were very nice, thoughtful, accommodating. The responsibility of my assignment was spelled out well by each of the many who held administrative positions in the USAID Complex. I liked the words of Dr. Martin: "An education which does not prepare the people of a developing country for the world of work is a mockery." And I also liked Dr. McClure's statement when I met him in his office: "Afghanistan is an agrarian nation. Ninety-five percent of its people work the land or earn their living in directly related agricultural pursuits." I wondered whether these facts had dictated the traditional curriculum. I hoped that the new curriculum we were here to help create would meet the practical requirements of this agrarian nation.

My journal entry for October 11 helped me not to forget the careful concerns I had been exposed to that day and days that followed. The Ministry of Education had asked the Curriculum and Textbook Project to extend its assistance according to facts I had learned that day.

This careful orientation to the responsibility of USAID and the Columbia Team's preference for beginning at the bottom in matters pertaining to curriculum development was significant. I understood the reciprocal relationship of USAID and the Columbia Team and felt good about it. But the milestones to be met were sobering. There was work to do. Before a curriculum could be improved, manuscripts completed, textbooks issued, achievement tests scored, teacher training programs initiated, someone, many someones, would have to start working. It would soon be two weeks since my arrival. I was eager to start working.

I got up to look once more at the blanket of stars. It was another clear view of a Kabul night sky. Even though it was late, I saw a shepherd and his sheep disappear into the darkness. Here was a wonderland, indeed. Shepherds bringing home their sheep even when their homes were in the city. And it was not peculiar. I was glad I had come. There was much to learn. It was foolish to worry but good to be concerned. What I observed this day would serve me many a good turn.

IV.

MAY YOU BE NOT TIRED

At last! Nine days of parties and proper orientation to the American presence in this city was over; what I wanted most was to meet my counterparts and to see my office which, I was told, was on the fourth floor of the Ministry of Education in the heart of downtown Kabul. It was already October 13.

The USAID van was at my door at 7:30 sharp. Mildred had told me that punctuality on both their part and mine was expected. This was an AID regulation pertinent to the post of duty. I appreciated this. It is not hard for me to be punctual.

While I thought I had seen most of the city on all the party teas, I had not really seen how the typical Kabul resident lives. Our AID driver, an Afghan, pointed out to me the nan bakeries (bread) which were located on the corner of about every fourth street. These handy locations made it convenient for Afghan children to walk every morning to the ovens to purchase a day's supply for the family. We stopped for Shirley Tariki, librarian of the Curriculum-Text Project. I was glad to meet her. She was an American married to a high-ranking Afghan. I learned later that she would be an understanding ally because she had already made the adjustment of living in a culture that differed extremely from living in the States.

We crossed the last bridge, passed Hotel Metropol and Plaza Hotel, rode around one more turn and there, that five-story, blue-front building was the Ministry of Education. Almost every nerve and sinew of my body tingled and churned. I checked my arms and hands to be sure I was not about to break out with hives. Shirley turned to me, "Is this your first overseas post, Dr. Kauffman?" I confessed that it was.

"You are just suffering a series of curiosities," she said. Then she led me through a crowd of on-lookers who daily stand around the entrance of the Ministry to see the Westerners arrive. Shirley told me to get used to being stared at. A Westerner is an object of curiosity to Afghans. She added that we will pass through this large double-door entrance every morning and take the elevator to the Fourth Floor. As she pushed the button for the Fourth Floor, I almost wished it wouldn't stop. It did.

My Afghan counterparts, four, were there at the office door to welcome me. They pointed to the only poster on the otherwise vacant wall: WELCOME DR. KAUFFMAN.

My desk was roughhewn with edges that snagged my hose nearly every day, but relationships with Mr. Wardak, Mr. Najand, Mr. Tarin, and Mr. Alimi were seldom snagged. A better team of learners would have been difficult to find.

Except for the tea breaks each mid-morning and mid-afternoon, we began a work schedule that was almost Trojan. Even though time seemed to be at a premium, I did not feel like short-cutting the Afghan custom of shaking hands with each person in the whole Curriculum-Textbook Project (about twenty) every morning upon arrival at the Office. How much longer it

took to say to each as you shake hands, "Salaam aleykum" ("Hello. How do you do?") than just to walk in swiftly to your desk with a wave and a "Hi"! After weeks of conforming to their custom, the morning ritual gradually changed because of pressures to produce something to test in the schools. I heard them say "En shaala" ("God willing") when I asked whether it was all right to go straight to my desk and start working. And then, when Mr. Hamid, the Afghan director of the Project, added, "Khosh aamedeyed" ("Make yourself at home is our want"), this was all I needed to press harder on my American accelerator to work, work, work. The magnitude of my assignment, after three weeks of visiting schools in Kabul and four other major cities, bore down upon me like nothing I had ever known in the whole of my professional experience.

Mr. Wardak and I travelled by air and by AID travel van to Herat, Mazar Sharif, Kandahar, and Jalalabad. What were the schools in these four cities like? Four walls. Broken-down benches pushed up to broken-down tables. A piece of board once painted black with most of the black rubbed off. A rag for eraser. Teachers, sixth-grade graduates, some ninth- and tenth-grade. Method, teacher telling; pupils repeating after in unison. No evidence of thinking, just rote memorization, half or quarter of a line at a time, with children echoing back in loud monotones.

When recess time was announced, the teacher would stop right in the middle of a line and state that the rest of the line would be learned tomorrow. It was not a great trauma to me to discover that there was no electricity in most of these schools. That meant no movies, projectors, video tapes, not even Polavision Instant Movies! At least teachers were spared the task of untangling that mass.

School's were crowded but used. Afternoons, another group of first-graders moved in while the morning group went home to write the lines in their copy books--lines they had memorized in the morning session. There was little variation from school to school--Kabul, Mazar Sharif, Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar. Teachers were products of the system and taught as they were taught.

I came back to Kabul and to the office wondering, "Do equipment and attractive facilities have anything to do with the learning process?" There were few pictures, practically no charts, very little space to do art work or to construct models. There were certainly no beauty spots in any of the rooms except for the children. They were beautiful. Floors (sometimes cement but many times just dry, dusty ground) were swept clean.

The readers (texts) were for the most part completed, this being near the close of the March to November term. In the Jalalabad and Kandahar schools I observed more of how it is at the beginning of a school term. School terms in southern provinces of Afghanistan begin in September and end in April. But the time of the observation seemingly made little difference in what teachers did or in the response children made. Every day was review of the previous day with perhaps two or three more lines to memorize and copy in their copy books. I wondered so many things! What happens to children's imaginations and creative potential when week after week is given to rehashing worn-out stories?

The teachers appeared to be committed to teaching; one especially showed creative imagination. The questions she asked stimulated good response. For ten minutes a lively discussion was going on. She took the children to the window to view the school garden outside and to note signs

I.

THE FAREWELL

It wasn't easy to turn from the ticket counter and luggage window in Kabul, Afghanistan, and see all those familiar faces--Afghans, Columbia Team, USAID executives--waiting to say last words. So early in the morning the Ariana flight to Tehran was scheduled! I told friends it was too early in the morning to come to the airport to bid us farewell. But there they were. And that handshake with my Afghan counterparts was different from the habitual handshakes of every morning upon arrival at the office in the Ministry of Education. That one was ritual. This one was not. As I moved along in the press of well-wishers and saw Mr. Wardak running, pushing to get to the center of the handshaking, I broke down. He had walked all the way from his home to the airport. And there was also Mrs. Nuria, the first-grade teacher in the DMA (laboratory school) who, in those early crucial periods of our trial materials, asked whether we could keep her in stories the rest of the year.

I wanted to hug her but she hugged first. I was proud that Mrs. Nuria had come to see me off because it had been more than a year since our team worked with her and the twenty-five first-graders. At an important stage in the development of the Textbook Project, Mrs. Nuria had stepped into the gap, proving that the new material and its accompanying guide for teaching it could be understood by teachers in the public schools of Afghanistan and that children's response to the new reader text could be just as effective

of winter. Except for the tired-looking garden, the schoolyard was bare and rough. As far as I could tell, there was no play equipment. Children mostly stood around and stared. I realized that it was probably my presence that promoted the staring. Hadn't Shirley warned me that I would have to get accustomed to the stares? I realized, too, that American children would stare if an Afghan were to visit their school.

Physical education consisted of rambling runs and jumps. There were no directed games. In one school, however, a teacher called three grades together (about 80 children) and directed some circle activity. Children responded gaily to the games. They looked healthy and happy. Again I wondered, "What do equipment and facilities have to do with learning?" If learning can take place under these conditions, what difference does it make if materials, teachers, and environment are monotonous? Subsequent visits to these same schools would undoubtedly reveal more about the curiosity and creative potential of these children. There were subsequent visits. Many, in fact. I continued to wonder whether children discover that reading is a way to satisfy curiosity. Is their sense of wonder aroused? Do any of the school children ever go beyond the textbook to satisfy that wonder?

There was something admirable, however, about the teachers in these schools--a dedication, an eagerness to see children succeed. In spite of the poor floors, blackboards, bare walls (no place to post anything), I saw several teachers using ingenuity. Children brought beans and seeds in cans for counting. And there were samples of plants from along the road. If shelves and tables were not available for display, these teachers found ways to make boards do what tables do. The children showed an eagerness to learn. There must be some satisfaction felt, some excitement in reciting the letters, monotonous though it be!

I thought, "The new materials will have to retain some of the old--that part that makes learners feel they are achieving--or else all effort and money will be in vain. The new materials will have to grip teachers as these seemingly unmeaningful materials have gripped these teachers. It is a strange observation, indeed, to say that there were no children who appeared to be bored. This could hardly be said of schools in the States. There are many bored children there."

I have heard it said by some who go into underdeveloped countries that locals are stupid, that they cannot do it; so they push locals aside and do the work themselves. From what I have observed, these Afghans have a lot more ability than they are given credit for. Our new materials must build on these abilities. It will not be easy. More than a little patience will be needed. I have never had enough of that!

There is much talk about literacy, relevance, and practicality. I could not get away from the notion that this country has potential and the greatest potential is its people. Even after this very brief exposure to the land, its resources, its customs, and its historical background, I formed this impression listening to my counterparts explain things as we travelled from city to city, from school to school. I asked many questions! Mr. Wardak, Mr. Najand, Mr. Alimi, and Mr. Tarin were patient with me, never making me feel foolish for asking them.

Tired? Yes. Always tired at the end of every day. The Afghan custom of shaking hands at close of work days with "Maanda nabaasheyed" ("May you be not tired") is one custom that now carried meaning. "Maanda nabaasheyed" was their attitude. It very soon became mine. We were never too tired to meet again the next day refreshed with an even stronger will to

continue working. Hadn't the Ministry of Education asked the Curriculum and Textbook Project to extend assistance in developing textbooks that teach children to read? There was no time to stay tired for long.

V.

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS....

Seven weeks were hardly long enough for me to feel at home in this culture. But gradually I understood more of how the Afghan mind thinks. It is different. It is Asian. Anything Western (and that's anything west of Germany, France, and England, clear across the United States) is totally deprived of anything Asian. Slowly I peeled off the layers of Western culture and tried on new layers. At first they did not fit well. I hoped that in another six months I would look, think, and act at least somewhat Asian.

Planning textbook materials for the primary schools in the States is one thing; in Afghanistan it is quite another. I had visited a total of twenty-five schools, including eight in Kabul. Primary schools in Afghanistan are what I think schools in America were like in the middle 1600s and up to the time in the 1800s when Horace Mann began lecturing and spreading pamphlets all over New England. I needed his vision and also some of Mary and Elizabeth Peabody's vision. This language--Farsi and Pashtu--seemed so difficult. My language teacher encouraged me with each lesson. I could count to ten and name the days of the week in Farsi. I had only what one could call a survival usage of marketplace phrases. And even those trusty phrases like "Chand Afghani?" ("How much money?" and "Qimat ast" ("It's expensive") soon ran out and conversation lagged.

The phrase "Parwaa neyst" ("It doesn't matter") was one of my favorite phrases. Maybe the reason was that I needed to use it so often.

However, even that phrase served me a bad turn once. After a week of language lessons, I felt secure enough to go alone to the vegetable and fruit bazaar to give my half-dozen phrases some practice. The taxi driver understood my direction; at least he drove straight to the vegetable row of bazaars. There were the lovely orange carrots all tied in bundles much too large. As I lifted one bundle and was explaining to the owner that I wanted only half that many, could he please give me half (all this in my faltering Farsi); a donkey, carrying a load of potatoes, was there, too, and bit off three of the carrots I was holding. I jerked back startled and the donkey turned. The load became unbalanced, spilling potatoes all over the road. I said "paarwa neyst" ("it doesn't matter") but meant to say "bobak sheyed" ("excuse me"). That is the way it is with a limited vocabulary! The man with the donkey was gracious enough to laugh at me. There were many occasions later to practice both phrases. I learned to use them in the right places.

After my three-week observation of some twenty to thirty schools, I suddenly could not say "parwaa neyst" anymore. Maybe it does matter that these hundreds and hundreds of children learn to read, develop their imaginations, and find ways to satisfy their curiosity.

Research showed that the highest drop-out rate is at grade three. Fewer and fewer go on to grade six--one in ten. And 90 percent of the children who complete grade six still cannot read. I asked my counterparts how this could be, because it appeared to me that most of the children knew their textbook. They said: "Yes, most children in our schools learn to recite the whole textbook. But that is all they can do. That is all they need to do to get promoted to the next grade. They cannot recognize the words when they appear in a different book or in a different setting."

"Is it true," I asked, "that the national literacy rate is below ten percent?" Mr. Wardak then showed me the latest figure on Afghan literacy to be five percent. I thought about the conditions in the schools as I had seen them--health and hygiene, for instance. Aren't there some needs more important than the ability to read? Every time I started thinking about priorities, barriers shot up. Afghans need this, Afghans need that, but before each this and that, I thought of another need which was even greater--reading. If Afghans could read, then they could help themselves. If the new materials included stories, lessons, and problems relating to health and prevention of disease, there would be fewer needs for treatment of diseases. In a classroom which is a center of inquiry, children who read could find answers to their own questions. They would not be captives of teachers. Children could reach out and discover, on their own, answers to their problems. The point is not mastery of information, but mastery of the art of finding out. Reading is a way of finding out. Reading, though it had not been considered an important skill in Afghanistan, must become important if people are to help themselves rather than to depend upon others for help.

This is not a Garden of Eden theory which requires children to discover the world anew. Rather, it is a theory that requires children's active and creative participation in their own education. It is a theory that requires teachers to be associate learners with children, so that together, teachers and learners, they will develop skills for finding out what they need to know.

But Afghanistan is poor; her material resources are meager. Most of her people are illiterate, and only a quarter of her children attend school at all.

Yet Afghanistan's human resources are great. How else could she have survived, encumbered with all these disadvantages? Giving a significant number of people an education which turns attention to the future rather than recapitulating the past, Afghanistan could turn disadvantages into bases for solid progress. And the nation could even do it without a windfall discovery of oil or gold or precious stones.

But no matter what skills are taught, I knew that the old ways would persist, and significant change would come slowly, if at all. Only if those skills were taught in such a way that natural creativity and inventiveness were stimulated and rewarded could it be realized.

The Curriculum and Textbook Project, directed by a team of specialists selected by Teachers College, Columbia University, had been invited ten years earlier by the Afghanistan Ministry of Education to help establish a foundation for regenerating the country's primary education system. TCCU's contract, I was told, would extend only until June 1976, and the project itself was to be phased out over the succeeding year. The Afghans were asking the TCCU team to help them cope with the imperatives of their education reform.

Dr. Mitchell Owens, director of our project, asked me how soon we could get something into the schools to test our theory. He said, "We need some new reading materials to try on a few pupils to see whether what we think is so is really so. It is already November and the new school term begins again in March of next year." Then he asked, "Could you produce something?"

I examined the research that had been done prior to my coming to the project. Thorough analyses of the traditional material had already been made--the materials that were producing failure. These studies revealed

something about the vocabulary load. The first-grade reader had 68 pages and 550 new words, an average of 8.2 new words per page. The second-grade reader had 57 pages and 1,359 new words, an average of 20.7 new words per page. This vocabulary of 1,909 words, three-fourths of which appeared only once in the two texts, shed considerable light on the cause of such a high failure percentage. Such a vocabulary was too formidable for children, even adults, to master. American primary reading texts average less than one new word per page, with a high frequency of that new word throughout the remaining pages of the text.

Furthermore, the Afghan texts were written with no space between words, no punctuation, and no paragraphing:

"چطوریکه شما میدانید خواندن بدون فاصله بین کلمه‌ها مشکل خواهد بود."

ASYOUCANWELLIMAGINEREADINGISDIFFICULTOBVIOUSLYSOMETHINGNEEDSTOBEDONE

The average American reader may not find the above totally unintelligible. But for a beginner who is meeting the abstract symbols for the first time, it makes the task seem more difficult. Space between words ought to help.

The content of the old texts was very adult, each page entirely different from the previous page. There was nothing childlike about the content.

I said to my counterparts, "Do you mean there is no story build-up, no suspense that makes children want to turn the page to see what happens next?"

"What do you mean, suspense?" they asked.

"Plot, a problem whose solution can only be found by reading the next and the next page," I said.

"Dr. Kauffman, we don't know what you mean," all four counterparts said.

Thus it was that we spent the next three weeks reading children's books. TCCU had provided a fair selection of juvenile books, both text and trade books. Many of the leading publishers' sets of curriculum readers were in the Project Library. Shirley was a big help to me during the next three weeks making these books available. We started with folktales. It was a crash course in children's literature, you may be sure. And how these stories lit the lights! The four counterparts read stories separately and sometimes together. We discussed the provocative plots. We analyzed the characters. We noticed vocabulary, especially verbs. Weren't these words stout? How carefully and exactly the words were chosen.

And speaking of words, I discovered then how very sterile the Afghan vocabulary is. The stories in English which we were reading had puppies, kittens, colts, calves, chicks, ducklings. When Mr. Wardak told me that there is no word in Farsi or Pashtu for the animal young except baby, I exclaimed in no little shocked tone, "Do you mean you just have baby goat, baby camel, baby sheep, baby donkey?"

"Yes. We have no other word," they all said.

"What about sounds? Do you have a word for the sounds the animals make?"

"What do you mean?" they asked.

"Well, how does a donkey sound? I hear them every morning outside my compound as they are driven past my door. And I hear sheep and goats, too.

"Do you mean, a word that says noise?"

"Yes, but the word must sound like the noise of each different animal. Let's try it. You bray like a donkey and then make a word that describes the sound."

They hesitated. Mr. Najand said, "But people will think we're crazy."

And this was the beginning of their discovery of animal-sound words in the stories they were reading in the American books, as well as words given to the young of animals.

"I bet children in the schools could help us make a word for these sounds," I said.

The next morning Mr. Tarin came to the office earlier than usual to tell me that he tried out the experiment on his own children. He then put three Farsi words on the blackboard for the sound of a sheep, a rooster, and a hound. In Farsi these words did not look like the familiar baa, cock-a-doodle-doo, and bow-wow. And anyway, the bark of an Afghan hound is a lot more fierce than bow-wow. The upshot of Mr. Tarin's coinage of words was that the whole Fourth Floor of the Ministry of Education was drawn in on the discovery.

We tried movements of animals next. I was not quite prepared for the shock when the men told me that there was no word but "walk" and "run" for the movement of each of the different animals.

"You mean a bird walks, a bug walks, a frog walks, a duck walks? Well then, what does a snake do?"

"A snake walks," Mr. Najand laughingly added.

I began to realize for the first time how much literature had contributed to the vocabulary of cultures that are fortunate enough to have books written especially for children. What can be done here in Afghanistan

as the response given to Mr. Wardak, who helped to write the book and who taught the first three stories to the twenty-five.

As we cleared papers through most of the check lines (sometimes endless in this country--so many signatures required) and people, one by one, bade us warm and appreciative farewells, I could see our luggage already rolling toward the jet-liner, the only jet owned by the Ariana line. Mr. Wardak, Mr. Najand, Mr. Tarin, and Mr. Alimi, my four Afghan counterparts who knew the most about how the project had come this far, were following me clear up to the last gate.

I said, "Thank you for helping to bring the curriculum project this far."

They said, "Thank you for not giving up when, to you, things looked impossible."

I said, "Don't let the project die."

They said, "Don't be afraid that we will let this good start bog down. We will work and work and work, even to the point of giving up morning and afternoon tea breaks."

I laughed. I remembered so well the times when the team worked straight through without breaks, those times when pressure was bearing down on us to keep Mrs. Nuria and nine other first-grade teachers in the Kabul schools in stories. But I remembered, too, how important some of the tea breaks were, especially those in which we welcomed back a project team member who had lived a year in the States furthering his academic preparations in order to perform the kind of tasks textbook writing demanded.

As I climbed the steps to board the plane, I turned to wave for the last time. There on the balcony of the Kabul airport stood the entire

with such a sterile vocabulary? My assignment to this task of producing texts that are childlike was becoming more hopeless. I thought that this was surely the forever of never. I remember going to Dr. Owens' office at the end of this day completely nonplussed. A paraphrase from Elizabeth Browning--How do I ail? Let me count the ways--is all I could think to say. His response to that outburst was, "Do what you can with what you've got."

I went home thinking about what I've got. There was interest. What greater asset is there? When there is interest, anything can happen! Ability soars when interest drives! Sure. That's it. Fan that spark! This endeavor, if it is to do what we know has to be done, will have to begin with interest. And we had it! Not only among the Language Arts counterparts, but the whole Fourth Floor--counterparts and specialists from all the other divisions wanted to get into the act of developing a fertile vocabulary. They said, "We all want to help you write stories."

Of course, not all could be a part of the act. In fact, when I suggested to my counterparts that we write a new story using only words children had learned in their traditional first-grade text and take it to several schools to see whether children could read, they said, "Where will we get the story?" And I said, "You will write it." They said, "We can't. How can we write a story when we have never read one?"

This admission was the signal to me to take the American curriculum readers from the textbook shelves and study the beginning stories--their characters, the vocabulary, the number of new words per page, the frequency by which they were used, and the plots. Was there a problem in each story and was it sounded early, even on the first page? Throughout the pages that followed, how was the problem resolved?

The men discovered the consistent vocabulary control in the American readers. They noted the frequency of words used throughout the readers. They even discovered the pre-reading activity books. Mr. Wardak initiated the idea of a reading readiness book which would prepare children for coping with abstract symbols on the page.

"Like what?" I asked.

"Like this Before We Read book," he said.

I was glad that the idea for a pre-reading experience came from one of the counterparts. I was quite sure there ought to be some kind of material provided which would prepare children for a school experience--one that differed appreciably from their home experiences.

The next few weeks we had to decide on what goals, with what means, in what time, and toward what consequences we should begin the task of textbook writing.

There is an old Persian proverb: "To command nature, you must obey her." I thought, "By all means, let us obey the nature of children." There was much to do and we had much to do with. The four of us sat together to assess what we had:

--We had interest and a growing awareness of conditions in matters pertaining to reading.

--We had a will to work.

--We had a desire to find out why children were not learning to read.

--We had a belief that children learn to read when material deals with subjects children know about and have personally experienced.

--We had an urge to produce material written with children in mind.

--We had a belief that the material must be written according to the nature of the learning process.

--We said: By all means, let us influence nature but without contradicting or betraying her.

In a developing country, one is forced to make nationals into writers and teachers almost overnight--people who really should be students. The difficulty of performing this conjuring feat seemed almost beyond me. But here is where the combined efforts of those who had the interest, the will, the desire, the beliefs, and the urge became absolutely crucial.

It meant planning. It meant establishing a set of guidelines for writing. Moreover, it meant understanding the culture in order to make the content fit the needs of the country. It meant setting up specific experiments with small groups of children to see whether words on a page could be read with comprehension. It even meant thinking about what children would do with the skill after they had acquired it. Would there be any books besides textbooks to read?

It may seem to be a glorious and magnanimous gesture to make children in a country able to read; but, in effect, unless we make their newly-acquired skill a part of their lives, they may forget how to read. The task, therefore, meant that the materials must do more than teach the skill. The materials must create a desire to continue reading throughout a lifetime. And this means there must be books, all kinds of books.

A nation of children learning to read is the first step toward making a nation of lifetime readers. Perhaps, who knows, maybe in a hundred years--even two hundred years--there will be authors emerging from this nucleus of literates who will produce a supply of children's books to keep up with the demand.

VI.

IT'S GOING TO TAKE TIME

It was November 11, 1969, exactly six weeks after that first ride through the city from the airport. But it was more than six weeks' worth of learning. "Six weeks' time is nothing in this land," my counterparts reminded me. A quick thought flashed through my mind--six years is probably more like it! "Afghanistan," they said, "is still as stubbornly independent as it was in the days when it held its borders closed." This country, for the most part, is very poor. What one sees and hears, however, depends upon where one is standing and upon what sort of person one is. One fact is certainly clear--these people need no new exploiters to take from them that which they already are trying so hard to accomplish.

There was evidence that the Afghan people had accomplished something. I discovered it after reading the many published reports by Afghan scholars and by my predecessors. The Aziz Hamid and Dr. David Mullen reports, 1968; Dorothy Raukema's February 17, 1969, outline and suggestions for a scope and sequence (what and when aspects of the primary curriculum); Lynn Lecour's October 9, 1968, research and explanations for the high percentage of failure in the first three grades; the Ministry's Planning Department study, Education in Afghanistan During the Last Fifty Years, published in 1968; Ghulan Hasson Mujaddidi's study, Education in Afghanistan, published in 1962; and UNESCO's World Survey of Education (section on Primary Education),

published in 1958 by the United Nations. These were a few of the documents I studied each night and weekends for another two weeks' worth of learning.

Until the early 1900s, mosque schools provided the only education available in most parts of the country. Most of the teachers were Moslem religious scholars, but the curriculum included secular subjects as well as religious.[1]

Development of education during World War II, the time when Afghanistan became isolated from other countries, had encountered financial problems. After World War II, certain changes were brought about in the educational system and new methods of teaching were gradually being sought. A rapid development of primary education was essential to ensure that more people became literate and to expand the development of the secondary, vocational, and higher education levels.[2]

Although it is important for Afghanistan to have new and appropriate textbooks, it is more important that those who have been involved and those who come after them understand the philosophical bases underlying the conclusions that each of the above studies reveals. It was from the Hamid and Mullen 1968 reports that I became aware of the educational expectations of both the Ministry of Education and Teachers College Columbia University (TCCU). The curriculum framework and subject matter for the new texts was plainly set forth. Through the agreed upon objectives, I recognized the importance of an integrated curriculum. I understood these objectives which were based on a clearly defined philosophy that language arts, science,

---

[1]Planning Department, Education in Afghanistan During the Last Fifty Years, Ministry of Education, 1968.

[2]Ibid.

mathematics, health, social studies, and practical works should all link together, each division buttressing objectives of every other. It was an accomplishment to be proud of. I thought of the hours Afghan and American leaders had spent in the weeks, months, and years prior to my arrival, churning out a philosophy and set of objectives acceptable to the Afghan Ministry of Education and in harmony with principles of good education.

Moreover, guidelines for the Afghan curriculum were based on the same principles of curriculum design that I had been taught in my own country. From my short exposure to the conditions in Afghan schools, I understood the need and the urgency for a new curriculum geared to the expectations of a developing country. I felt more secure after this study.

But doing is not as easy as knowing what is good to do. Seeing these objectives applied in the classrooms of Afghanistan would require more time than the two weeks I had just spent learning about them. I understood well, as the days and weeks passed, what the counterparts meant by their frequent reference to a 200-year time slot. There were those fleeting thoughts that it might even be 2,000 years before these worthy objectives could be realized in the classrooms of Afghanistan. There were at least five major problems that would require considerable time to solve:

1. Shortage of qualified teachers.
2. Shortage of school buildings and equipment.
3. Imbalance of educational opportunities.
4. Inefficiency of the school system to prepare students to cope with the socio-economic needs of the country.
5. Detachment of the present curriculum from the realities of the family, community, and national life.

These five problems are characteristic of most developing countries. But they were our problems now at the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan.

A curriculum detached from realities of family and community life! A place to begin. We must prepare materials that eliminate the detachment of family and community life. My counterparts quickly comprehended that stories in the first-grade texts should connect children with home, family, and school and with friends and community workers. Children need stories that help them identify with the familiar, that develop pride and respect for work. But it was hard for the counterparts to come up with a plan that would start the action toward writing such stories. And it was hard for me, too. After I read their first attempt to write a story, I wondered whether there would ever be stories.

We had previously agreed that we need more evidence of children's problems in reading and that a way to get at the problem was to take a new story to the Kabul schools and test children individually. The school term was nearing its close in late November. I had suggested we take a story to a sampling of first-graders, a story which contained words from their reader but in a new setting. My counterparts thought it was a good idea. "But where will we get the story?" they asked. I said, "You will write it." They said, "How can we? We have never read a story about family, friends, and community workers." I said, "Well, will you try?" They tried. It was dreadful! I then realized that their concept of reading was not that of getting meaning from the page. Reading to them was saying the words, not comprehending the meaning. I showed them that not every detail had to be spelled out in words, but that the children were expected TO BRING SOME OF IT FROM THEIR EXPERIENCE. So the counterparts' first attempt at writing (and each of the four submitted a story) furnished the occasion to go into

a "brown" study of stories--particularly stories in the first-grade readers from the Curriculum Textbook Library. Readers published by Ginn, Houghton Mifflin, Harcourt Brace, D. C. Heath, Harper and Row, and Scott Foresman--the library had them all.

Mr. Wardak, Mr. Alimi, Mr. Najand, and Mr. Tarin examined the books with the following questions in mind:

--How are the stories built?

--Is there plot?

--What makes the reader want to turn the page?

--How many words to a sentence?

--How many sentences to a page?

--How frequently do the new words appear in the story?

--How many new words are introduced on each page?

--How many pages to a story?

--What is the general content of stories?

Having made their own systems for finding answers to these questions, the counterparts then compared their results and drew up a set of principles found to be common to all six sets of primary readers:

--One new word, seldom more than one, per page.

--At least six repetitions of the word throughout the story.

--Two to four words per sentence.

--Three to four sentences per page and increasing as vocabulary increased.

--Five to six pages per story.

--Picture on every page--what was not said in words was said in picture.

--Plot in every story--problem announced on first page, suspense increased with each succeeding page, and solution on the last page of the story.

--Content around family activity, later expanded to include friends, community workers, seasons, and cultural traditions.

They compared these principles with the traditional Afghan readers. Their discovery was a real breakthrough. The excitement must have been heard. It was talked about for days and became discussion material over the entire Fourth Floor of the Ministry.

When the counterparts examined the Teacher's Guide accompanying each set of readers, they made further discoveries and deductions about pictures and how they aid in word recognition. They saw how words are recognized without the teacher telling and the emphasis given to drawing meaning from the page. Beginning sounds of words, context, and pictures were all aids in unlocking new words. They even noticed the emphasis given to whole words, phrases, and sentences as well as letters within words. "The stories were interesting even though simple," one said. "Could that be the reason children want to turn the page?" I asked. "Of course," Mr. Tarin quickly added. "Where does the meaning come from?" I asked. "From the children who read the lines," Mr. Alimi answered with assurance in his voice.

What a breakthrough! These sessions in the office were not dull. Interest grew. The counterparts asked me (I did not have to ask them) whether they could write another story. "We think we know more about what we are doing now," Mr. Najand said.

The stories were an improvement over those written two weeks before, but they still were not brilliant. Nevertheless there was evidence of learning. Just be patient, I said to myself.

We selected the best one from the four stories and engaged a calligrapher to write the new story in the style of the traditional readers. Counterparts contacted headmasters of four different schools in Kabul requesting the privilege of conducting an experiment with first-graders. In spite of the fact that it was near the end of the year and the examination period, permission was granted. All four counterparts were known and respected by teachers and headmasters in the schools because they had once been teachers in schools throughout the country and had even taught some of the present teachers at the primary level as well as at Higher Teachers College. The counterparts' maturity and years of teaching experience proved to be an asset in contacts with the present school personnel.

We had to hurry. Schools were closing in one week. Again, I discovered the need to teach how to organize and how to prepare. This experiment of a new story, written with an intriguing plot and in the vocabulary learned in the traditional text, was to be taken by counterparts, each to a different school, to test a sampling of first-graders. We even made an evaluation instrument to measure comprehension. Each of the men took along a tape recorder (property of the Project) in order to make a detailed analysis on difficulties--reversals, substitutions, omissions, and pronunciation errors.

The results were even more disturbing than anticipated. Only two first-graders could recognize any of the words. Second-graders were sampled. A few could pronounce words but with no comprehension. It was not until the story was given to third-graders that any amount of ability to read was manifest, but the comprehension with even third-graders was weak.

The experiment revealed what we needed to know. Miss Lecours' conclusions for the high illiteracy rate--vocabulary load, content, and

Columbia Team and USAID officials who knew us. Dr. Ralph Fields was there waving--Dr. Fields who was to become the next Chief of Party. He was now in Kabul on a short visit checking on progress in the Language Arts and other sections of the Curriculum-Textbook Project. Then I remembered how he threw his arms around me and hugged me. He had already discovered the progress made toward getting into production sets of textbooks that would truly teach children of Afghanistan to read. The hug was not without a bit of embarrassment, for there were my four Afghan counterparts observing what men and women never do in public in Afghanistan. It was the spirit that accompanied all those handshakes, hugs, and waves that brought tears after I sat down in my seat on the plane. "Bamaany khoda (goodbye) and may God bless," I said to the window of the airplane. "I was a guest in your land for two years and satisfied that we had started what the TCCU Project leaders and USAID Directors had impressed upon me at the beginning of my assignment. Directors of the Project said in my orientation during those first days two years ago, 'Train them to do it so that they can carry on when you leave. Don't do it for them.'" Now I knew that they could. I knew that they would.

method of learning (rote memorization without thought) were confirmed. Children could not read even though they were able to recite the whole text. Miss Lecours' statement at the conclusion of her research, that most children could not read at the end of grade six, was more easily understood. In addition to vocabulary load, memorizing without thought, and faulty teaching methods, her report concluded that textbooks with no uniformity of type, space between words, lack of consistency in the use of vowels and other symbols have all contributed to failure to learn to read.

The 48-page Lecour study plus one experiment in the four Kabul schools pinpointed the problem. It was decided by the Project Team and Afghan leaders in the Ministry that primary reading should be given priority ahead of the other related language skills; that scope and sequence for a meaningful program must emerge out of experience with actual children in actual classrooms.

In this quest for discovering meaningful scope and sequence, the team agreed that after a set of guiding principles for content and techniques of style had been established, reading readiness materials should be prepared and tried out on a group of preschool children. And directly following the reading readiness materials, a first-grade reader be prepared, trying out each story with follow-up activities on the same group of children.

I went home at the end of that week with a much lighter step and heart. It will take time, but perhaps not 2,000 years.

VII.

TEN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN PARTICULAR

Time never slows. It keeps the same pace. Neither did pace in the office slow. In fact, it accelerated. Dr. Owens, TCCU Director of the Project, reminded us again of the request from Mr. Aziz Hamid, Afghan Director, that something soon be placed in the schools for trial. The four counterparts and I reviewed what we had done and what we were ready to do next.

"We have to create a desire to read," Mr. Wardak said. "Pupils' first reading experience must be interesting. From the very beginning of the first grade, the reading text must say to the children, 'Reading can be a good time.'"

I remembered that it was Mr. Wardak who had initiated the idea of a reading readiness activity book, so I connected his suggestion of a pre-reading "something" to the questions:

1. What kind of experience would make Afghan children eager to read books?
2. How can we be sure the children are ready to read?
3. Do not the abstract marks on a page in a textbook require something more of eyes than seeing the actual chairs, tables, benches, and boxes in which supplies are kept?
4. How is a child walking past the door carrying the family's daily supply of nan (bread) different from seeing words on a page which say the same thing?

Mr. Alimi caught an even wider difference between the real and the written symbols of the real. He asked, "And what about children's ears? Do they hear the minute differences in word pronunciation and do they hear directions when they are given?"

We then listed kinds of developmental skills children need for a successful reading experience--skills that require eyes, ears, hands (especially fingers), arms, and legs, and voices to do things which differ appreciably from requirements of the home.

"That's exactly what the Before We Read books in the sets were proposing to do," Mr. Wardak insisted. The counterparts arranged a meeting of the entire curriculum-text force (counterparts and their American Advisors) to be held in the conference room. Dr. Owens and Mr. Hamid set a time when the whole force could be present.

The four, each in turn, told about their discoveries when they examined the basic primary textbooks. They showed their homemade charts as well as the enlarged one on which were listed the principles found to be common to all. They understood very well what they were proposing. They could even throw in an example or two for each question asked after the presentation.

For instance, when Dr. Owens asked what they meant by voice development, Mr. Tarin said, "Well, Afghan children are not used to listening to each other. They just speak out all at once whenever called upon. We want to make an exercise book that will give first-graders a chance to speak when all are listening."

Mr. Najand added, "And we want them to read a picture."

"What do you mean, read a picture? A picture is not like reading," someone else from the group said.

"Almost," Mr. Wardak said, and then went on further to explain how pictures--detail in the pictures--can be effective in sharpening eyes to see likenesses and differences in sizes, in shapes, in placement (before, after, under, in front of, behind). "Pictures are often a good way to add words to a child's vocabulary that may not be part of his everyday usage."

The group agreed, finally, that the counterparts should draw up a set of objectives for a reading readiness booklet along with examples of pages and bring them to the next meeting. It was an exhilarated group of men who met me at the office the next morning. They were ready to start planning the first book.

Again I asked, "What do children need when they start to school and how can they be taught step-by-step, lesson-by-lesson? Could we plan a series of lessons that would teach children in three weeks to discover a school behavior which is somewhat like home but which expands and extends skills of voice, eyes, hands, arms, and legs?" I even asked whether we could expect children during this readiness period to read and write their own names. "There is such need in school for recognizing one's own name, you know."

"Why not?" Mr. Wardak added. "And in the process, some may even learn to recognize the names of classmates."

Twelve lessons to cover in a three-week period were roughly sketched during the next week. A plan for a 25-page booklet with teacher's guide was shared with the whole Project. We were given the green light to seek out artists, linguists, calligraphers, and translators as needed. For the first time, it became necessary to delegate responsibility. Up to this time, the five of us had all worked together in the office, but now that we knew the direction and were approved by the entire Fourth Floor to forge ahead,

assignments were given to each of the counterparts. To Mr. Tarin, the selection of eight letters in the Farsi alphabet and at least six nouns in Farsi beginning with each of the eight letters. To Mr. Najand, permission from headmasters to use a public school near the Ministry in which to try our readiness material on ten preschool children who would be entering school in March. We particularly wanted an experimental group of seven-year-olds who had never been in school and who were not yet damaged (that is, in rote memorization habits). Required entrance age in Afghanistan is seven. Mr. Najand was well known among school administrators as well as among families in Kabul. However, he found it to be more difficult than he had at first realized because families wanted to send all of their preschoolers. Most families have not only a seven-year-old but a six-, five-, four-, and even a three-year-old. We left it up to Mr. Najand to select only those who were ready to enter school in March. And only ten. It must be kept in mind that this experiment was very crucial to the future of the whole project. If we find children in the experiment thriving on the materials, our hunches, stated objectives, and methods would then be considered a good procedure to follow in planning, writing, and testing subsequent material.

To Mr. Alimi was given the oversight of the art work. Artists were needed. Explicit directions had to be given artists on the kinds of drawings required for each lesson. He knew what was required in the pictures. For example: (1) a page showing a four-picture sequence, children telling the story they see in sequence; (2) a page of pictures in four rows, four pictures in a row whose beginning sounds were all alike save one; (3) a page for conversation showing a large picnic scene under a mulberry tree with grandfather fanning coals under the kabobs, brother feeding the fire under a kettle of yogurt, sister helping mother lay the blanket, another brother

filling small cups of water from a large jar brought from a container of boiled water from home. Concepts of good hygiene were to be emphasized. Math concepts and social concepts were also to be drawn from the children, according to what they see in the picture. Another picture for conversation was a Kuchi camp (Kuchis are the nomadic tribes), with a tent, camels, sheep, and blankets. From the picture children were to discern whether the family was setting up camp or dismantling it in preparation for moving on. They were also to identify what the children around the tent were doing.

There were to be several kinds of these "talk" pages bringing out health, math, and science concepts. And they were also to improve children's ability to express themselves. In addition to conversation pages, nine pages were given to phonetic elements in Farsi--exercises to identify words that begin alike.

Mr. Alimi found that the artists who tried out for the art position wanted to decorate pages and fill the spaces with things irrelevant to purposes outlined for that lesson. He found it difficult to reject their attempts, but after learning how to give directions more specifically, Mr. Alimi got what he needed. He said to me after the third day, "You know, I have chosen Mr. Nasrat as the artist of our project because he drew exactly what I wanted. But it was not until he understood the purpose."

I thought to myself, "What good experience these men are getting, and how firmly they are establishing in their minds the why behind everything they do." <u>They had to understand</u>. They had to make every step of the project understood by all whose assistance they depended upon. They usually did. However, not always on the first try.

To Mr. Wardak was given responsibility to plan the lessons, and to select the words, the concepts, and the skills to be developed. He was also

to oversee the writing of the teacher's guide. On the 17th of February, he would be responsible to teach the ten preschool children. Mr. Wardak had many years of teaching experience. I had confidence in his judgment. But would he know how to draw out the children and make use of their responses? Would he teach as most Afghan teachers taught--telling the answers and having children memorize what they were told?

There are many possible approaches to education. Approaches which are too self-consciously applied usually fail. I was pleased to discover that it was easy for the men (particularly Mr. Wardak) to grasp the meaning and sense of organic teaching. Teaching organically, the teacher is in the classroom solely for the purpose of drawing on the children's resources, which in practice means that he must have the patience and the wisdom to listen, to watch, and to wait until the children's line of thought becomes apparent.

"But, Dr. Kauffman, teachers in our country have always done the talking. Children do the listening. Teachers tell children what the book says and children repeat in unison what the teacher tells them to say. Do you mean that the teacher should draw out the answers and responses from the children? Do you mean that the teacher is the listener and children are the talkers?" asked Mr. Tarin.

I asked, "Do you think it can't be done? Why don't we try a lesson on a small group (like two or three) right here in the office? If it works with two or three, maybe it will work with ten."

The counterparts volunteered to bring their seven-year-olds, who were going to be first-graders, to the office the next day. There were three eager children to shake hands with the next morning and to say "Salaam a laekom" (fancy way to say hello in Farsi). The rest of the morning's

experiment was up to the counterparts. They had studied carefully the lesson plan, especially the questions that draw out of children their experience.

For example, the first page of the booklet is an orientation to school. A large picture showing homes in the background, school building in the foreground, and the teacher by the door. Along the street approaching the school are three children walking, accompanied by their fathers (an Afghan custom). Beside the school building is a well from which drinking water is taken. (Picture is drawn simply, no extra flourishes). The teacher's guide states the purpose: To make children feel free and secure by talking about things familiar to them. There are suggestions also in the guide for questions which allow opportunity for children to share their own experiences going to school for the first time:

--How many children?

--Boys or girls?

--Who is walking with them?

--It looks as though the boy in front is pointing toward the teacher; do any of you have an idea of what he is saying?

--How far do you think these children have to walk to school?

--Do you see their homes?

--Can you guess how far from the school they might be?

--Why do you think the teacher is outside standing by the door?

I wondered whether Mr. Wardak would ask these questions of the children. And if he did, I wondered if he would then <u>use</u> the children's responses and lead them naturally to the next question.

To my surprise, the three children responded freely and spontaneously to every question, in many cases giving a much larger answer than was

expected. Mr. Wardak picked right up on their responses and drew out further details relating to the responses.

Mr. Tarin sat beside me at my desk and wrote an instant English translation of the dialogue going on between teacher and taught. That's how I knew the organic process of teaching was catching on. It worked. I asked the counterparts after the children left, "How was it that Mr. Wardak, the teacher, did not do all the talking? How was it that he did not tell the children even once what to say? How did the children know what to say?"

"It was the questions. The questions made the children use their experiences," Mr. Najand said.

There followed an extensive conversation about what had just happened. By the time we left for lunch, almost the whole Fourth Floor had dropped in to learn what the excitement was all about.

Organic teaching is not new. UNESCO teachers today use it automatically as the only reasonable way of introducing reading to primitive people. Teachers start with what is there, the immediate environment, the familiar. However, organic teaching is not just important in underdeveloped cultures. It is indispensable in teaching children in any culture. Every good teacher from the beginning of time has known the importance of patience and wisdom to listen, to watch, and to wait until the learner's line of thought becomes apparent.

That morning in our office we had at least come within striking distance of the dream, something at least to begin on. Plans for the 20-page readiness booklet were becoming increasingly visible every day. Pages did not take shape, however, without much revising, correcting, deleting, improving. The artists had to throw away many a draft before it suited the counterparts.

They had come a long way from that mid-December day when the go-ahead signal to prepare a sample readiness booklet was granted to us.

February 15 Mr. Wardak, Mr. Najand, Mr. Tarin, and I bundled up in sweaters, coats, mittens, and boots. It was cold. Schools in Afghanistan are not heated. We drove to the public school in which Mr. Najand had arranged for us to try the twelve readiness lessons on the Ten Preschool Children.

The Headmaster met us at the door. (Just like the lovely big picture on the first page of the booklet.) Ten children were already sitting at the desks. But twice that many were standing outside peering through the windows. We could see their breath as they pressed against the glass. We knew they were cold. It was hard for me not to invite them in, but Mr. Najand reminded me that it would spoil the experiment.

The children met us every morning thereafter, in spite of the cold. They were more used to sitting at desks with coats and mittens than I. Interest ran high during the three weeks of trying out the twelve reading readiness leassons, and I was kept so busy observing the children and following the instant translation which Mr. Tarin was providing as he wrote at our table in the back of the room, that I forgot about the 40-degree temperature.

Children were led step-by-step, lesson-by-lesson, to learn a school behavior which was somewhat like home but expanded their skills with voice, hands, arms, and legs. They used their voices, eyes, and ears to do exciting and interesting things not done at home. I had hoped that in the three weeks, some would be able to recognize their own names on the attendance chart. They not only recognized their own names, but could recognize names of classmates. Moreover, they learned to speak one at a time and so clearly

II.

MILDRED, YOU THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING

My call to Afghanistan came before so much of the daily news focused on and around Arab countries. It was 1969, my sabbatical year from Hesston College, that college in Kansas where, as Professor of Education, I had led many to respect the importance of teaching primary children to read. I wanted an adventure in learning, an adventure in a new location. Plans were already made for me to spend a year on the George Peabody College campus, Nashville, Tennessee, as a post-doctoral fellow to do further research in the field of language arts. But how quickly and drastically the plan changed!

A call from Columbia University Teachers College, New York, came on August 6, 1969, asking whether I would accept a two-year assignment in Afghanistan as Language Arts Specialist working with a team of five other American specialists in the Curriculum-Textbook Project. My assignment would be to train Afghans to write language arts textbooks for the public schools of Afghanistan.

"Afghanistan?"

"Yes, Afghanistan," the director of overseas projects said.

"Teach nationals to write curriculum material? In what language?"

"Farsi, which is somewhat like Persian," he said.

"But I don't speak Farsi," I said.

"You don't have to. Your Afghan counterparts know the language. They will do the writing; you will teach them how."

that all in the room could hear. They also learned to refrain from speaking until another had finished (in Afghanistan that is an accomplishment of high order). I watched them tell a story from a four-picture sequence. (This exercise also gave practice moving the eyes from right to left.) I saw children listen attentively to a ten-minute story and recall the events in order of happening. They learned to follow one-, two-, and even three-step directions. In mathematical concepts, they counted to twenty, could identify the third camel, the tallest mountain, the smallest sheep in a picture. They identified words that begin alike. They identified pictures whose names begin with the same sound in a row of pictures and the picture beginning with a different sound. They discussed pictures which portrayed various Afghan customs. They could identify and even imitate animal sounds and other sounds heard on the street.

Because the above skills were planned in a balanced sequence throughout the readiness book, and because Mr. Wardak understood so well the purpose of each step as well as the nature of children and how they learn, the three-week experiment told us what we needed to know. Mr. Wardak said that the teacher's guide was clear in explaining the essential skill which each page and activity promoted.

We returned to the office in the Ministry with a report which made the whole Fourth Floor happy. At least we had a start. Our hunches about the nature of children and the nature of learning were confirmed. Dr. Owens and Mr. Hamid agreed that this three-week experiment gave us the boost of confidence we needed.

VIII.

ASAD, NAZO, AND LATIF

By now we were carrying on an "Alice" mentality. With every day's activity, we became "curiouser and curiouser." But there were obstacles. "Remember, this was only the first trial. Would the same results occur if you had tried the material on twenty-five children instead of ten?" our director, Dr. Ownens, asked.

Mr. Hamid, Afghan director, wondered the same. He asked whether the experiment ought not to be taken to the DMA (Afghan equivalent of a laboratory school). "In the DMA," Mr. Hamid went on to explain, "students who were studying to become teachers could observe the demonstration lessons."

The idea was good, but it was not a decision our division could make. I was aware that everything which needed to be done depended upon the approval of some other division of the Ministry. Every move, it seemed, required a hundred decisions and about as many approvals. Not a single one could be made without consulting the whole section of the Primary Department of the Ministry of Education. Administrative details had to clear through the director of the Curriculum-Textbook Project, to the Director of Primary Schools, to the President of Primary Education, to the Deputy Minister of Education. This was a chain which offered too many opportunities for incomplete transmission of information. Mr. Najand suggested a meeting of the entire administrative structure to be called in order that Mr. Hamid

could explain to them all at one time the advantages of moving the experiment to the DMA. Dr. Owens called the meeting.

Top ministry personnel showed keen interest when the proposal was presented, and approval was granted. Such meetings were needed from time to time; but whenever they met, a whole afternoon was consumed. Usually all of the designated persons at these meetings could speak and understand English. But not always did things move in a straight line. There was such a maze of rules. Most of the time I could understand when snarls occurred. Following protocol to the letter was important to the Afghan hierarchy. Occasionally a speaker would fall back into the Farsi language to get his point across. When this happened, Mr. Tarin was always there to give me the essence of what he was saying. Sometimes meetings occurred too often and too long. We had "miles to go" to meet the March 17 opening of the 1970 school term. And the middle of February was already showing on the calendar. We needed every minute of every day if we were to have the first lessons of the primary reader to try on the twenty-five first-graders at the DMA. The deadline helped all of us to work at our maximum. Almost every nerve and sinew had to be engaged in churning out stories. We had only the afternoons for working on the lessons; mornings were given to the ten preschool children in the readiness experiment. But what we saw happening there gave us confidence that we were on the right track.

The dependence on the Language Arts Division from the other curriculum divisions increased the urgency to produce on schedule. They said that their materials would be useless if children were not able to read. The pressure was good for us. We had to make good use of time.

I remember the stir we aroused on the Fourth Floor when names for the central characters in our book were discussed. Suggestions came from

everywhere. When the list grew upward to a hundred, Mr. Wardak suggested the elimination process. Let people place a tally mark by the three names most highly preferred. The whole Ministry of Education got into the act. The names receiving the most tally marks were Asad, Nazo, and Latif. I asked how these names look in Farsi. We needed to be sure the beginning and ending letters of the names were enough different that beginners could easily recognize them. When the counterparts showed me, I knew the names were well chosen:

Asad: اسد Nazo: نازو Latif: لطیف

With the approval of the characters' names, we could begin to write the stories. By this time, the counterparts understood what reading is. They knew it was not merely calling out the words or moving eyes across the page. They knew that reading is thinking about what words say. They also knew that children had to connect their experiences with the printed words, that ink marks make no sense until the reader brings something to them. They knew meaning is not in the ink but inside the mind of the reader. The child gets the meaning because he has experience to bring to the page. Once, while we were discussing for the eleventh time what takes place when a child reads, Mr. Najand said, "That has to be the organic approach you have talked so much about." I knew then that he knew.

It didn't take long to agree on the family as the theme on which to begin the first reader lessons. Children like the familiar. They like to read about people doing familiar things. Obviously, characters in the first stories should be members of a family. "Don't you think there ought to be a story for each family member, the one introduced becoming the main character for that story?" I asked.

Najand responded, "That would take the whole book to introduce each family member in a separate story." (Mr. Najand has eight children plus a grandfather and a grandmother living in his home.) We agreed, therfore, to limit the family in the book to a father, mother, sister, brother, and small brother, plus grandmother and grandfather. That would be seven stories. And after these seven, the cast of characters could enlarge to include friends, animals, and workers. Mr. Tarin stated that friends in the book should be matched in age and in interest to the three children. "For instance," Mr. Tarin went on, "Asad's best friends should be boys; Nazo's best friends, girls. This is in keeping with Afghan custom." Mr. Tarin was the guardian of Afghan tradition. It was important because it is through curriculum materials that most nations perpetuate their cultures. I appreciated the frequent checks Mr. Tarin threw in from time to time while we were still in the planning stage.

The settings of the first stories would naturally be around the home, later expanding to the village, the fields, picnic places, and cities. And in these stories the four seasons would be reflected.

I asked about folktales. The culture has many a tall tale handed down from age to age. The men agreed and said we ought to have room for at least one in each grade level. "Where in the sequence of stories should the folktale come?" I asked. Mr. Wardak suggested it be placed at the end of the book because of the large vocabulary. Most tales are longer than the regular story and require a larger reading vocabulary.

"Characters in the stories should, by their behavior, portray values held by the Afghan people," Mr. Tarin reminded us.

"Like what, Mr. Tarin?" I asked.

"Like respect for elders," he said.

Again there was agreement that characters in the stories should show that they are well-taught by their parents. But they also agreed that, in order for stories to be realistic, an occasional accident may occur in the story like the time when someone finds a match and is careless with it. I found out, while we were discussing the place for realism, that Afghan children, especially preschoolers, like to play with matches and are frequently punished when caught doing so. I wondered whether Latif, the four-year-old in our story family, might be the one to show that it does not pay to play with things forbidden. The development of that kind of story had potential for portraying another value held high in Afghan tradition--obedience.

Having reached agreement on the general content of the readers, several other technicalities, such as number of new words per page, frequency of use, pictures, and story plots, were discussed. How many sentences per page and how many pages per story were also items that needed to be agreed upon before the actual writing began. When the writing act finally commenced, problems spiraled. But by this time the Language Arts Division of the Project was a real unit. It was beautiful to see how problems were met and resolved. Each counterpart had specific duties to perform, but whenever one ran into a snag or met a tough decision, the other three were right there to assist.

Writing stories that were interesting and within the limits of the controlled vocabulary was herculean. There were days when I was sure it was "the twelfth day of never." But there were other days when I was just as sure that they could do it as Mary Lennox was sure in <u>The Secret Garden</u>. Mary was sure that Master Colin could walk again. All that Master Colin needed was hope. All that the counterparts needed was hope. <u>And hope there was</u>.

Every story had to be checked against our established principles. We literally wore a path to the vocabulary chart of words used in each story. This chart was taped on the west wall of our office. Here in neat columns was a record of every word, number of times, on which pages, and in which story the word was said. I think that the success of this material depended partly upon the frequent appearance of the same words throughout the reader.

As stories developed, so did vocabulary. We agreed that sentences had to be stepped up gradually in difficulty. One-line thoughts should gradually become two-line thoughts. For example:

Let's watch Father thresh the grain and ask
him for permission to ride on the thresher.

Children accustomed to reading a complete thought on one line would automatically have to continue to the next line to complete the thought.

In every meeting of the entire staff (called whenever the directors of the Project needed to be brought up to date), I observed how often the counterparts stressed the meaning aspect of reading. They talked more about the ability of getting meaning from the page than about ability to call the words. Once when Mr. Wardak was making a presentation to the President of the Primary Department of the Ministry of Education, I heard him say, "Teachers should let the children discover the meaning. They should not rob children of the satisfaction that comes from finding answers by themselves."

"How does a teacher do that?" the President asked. "Teachers have to tell children the meaning so that they can tell it back," he went on to say.

Mr. Wardak responded politely: "When children are reading, they do not have to be told. The teacher is careful to ask thought questions (how

and why questions) and the children read to find the answers. Children are capable of discovering meaning when they know how to read."

I had nothing more to add to this dialogue between the President of the Primary Department of the Ministry of Education and Mr. Wardak. I wondered whether teachers in America could have done as well.

IX.

BUT MR. HAMID, WE CAN'T POSSIBLY....

The announcement from the top office of the postponement of the opening of the new term from March 7 to March 21 was a boon to us in the Language Arts Division. We now had two extra weeks to get ready for the DMA experiment. In addition to writing seven stories (stories introducing the seven family members) there were the administrative arrangements to be worked out with the designated heads in the Laboratory School.

Here again, Mr. Najand's experience as former headmaster and his acquaintance with persons and schedules in the school proved to be an invaluable asset. The DMA facility had three sections of each grade through the third. Mr. Najand knew personally each of the first-grade teachers.

"Which teacher shall we select?" he asked one day after spending the forenoon with teachers and headmasters. "They all want to participate."

The eagerness and spontaneity displayed by so-called professional personnel amazed me. I observed a similar uninhibited willingness to participate at the school where the ten preschool children were being taught. It must be an Afghan characteristic, I thought. It was decided that Mrs. Nuria's class should be the one with which to try the new stories.

The two extra weeks granted by the Ministry's officialdom (cold weather being the reason) were certainly used to an advantage. By March 1 the 12-lesson experiment with the ten preschoolers was completed. We now had both morning and afternoon to work on the seven stories and teacher's guide. I knew that seven was about all we could prepare in that time. And

anyway, seven stories would be adequate to test the effectiveness of the material. What we needed to know was whether the reading readiness material was really an aid to children who were beginning to read. It was our hope that seven-year-olds, meeting words on pages for the first time, would find them interesting and meaningful and easy to recognize. The twelve lessons, we believed, provided good exposure to essential skills required in reading. At least, children were given opportunity to initiate their own ideas in a secure and sharing environment. It was to be an important observation, this DMA experiment!

But, regardless of how good a story is, it cannot supply the transitional needs unless it is in sympathy with Afghan children and has incident and temperament which they understand and sense. Stories have to be organic (natural) if they are to meet these needs.

The word "don't" is heavily used in Afghan speech. I questioned using the contraction, especially in the first pages of the reader. "But that's what children in Afghanistan are used to hearing," Mr. Tarin assured me. "'Don't' is one of the first words a child learns to say."

"Why is that?" I asked.

"Because there are so many dangers around the home and on the roads that parents and older brothers and sisters keep reminding the young in the family to watch out for danger," Mr. Tarin explained.

With this information, I understood better the plot in the first story. Asad was playing with the ball and accidentally let it roll into a pool of water. He is wearing his new shoes and starts to wade in after the ball. Nazo, his sister, comes running and shouting "Don't, don't." She points to a long stick lying nearby. Asad catches the hint, and with the stick retrieves the ball.

"Do they know English? English is the only language I know."

"Yes, the four counterparts whom you are to train can speak, read, and write English. The texts will be written in their language, but your work with them will be in English."

(It wasn't long after our work began that I realized the advantage of not having mastery over their language. I was more dependent on them for the language and culture than I would have been had I known the language myself.)

"But what about my mother? My mother lives with me. How can I make arrangements for her?"

"Is she in good health? If she is, take her along."

"Even to Afghanistan?" I asked. "She is 79 years old."

"If she is in good health and mentally alert," he said, "take her along."

I turned to Mother who was sitting in the same room reading, "Would you like to go with me to Afghanistan?"

"Where in the world is Afghanistan?" she asked.

Two months later, Mother and I stepped off the plane in Kabul, Afghanistan, the beginning of the biggest adventure in learning I have ever had. The whole Columbia Team was there to meet us. The Team consisted of five other American specialists--mathematics, science, health, social studies, practical works, plus a production specialist, a research specialist and two administrators, one heading the Curriculum-Textbook Project, the other the Chief of Party heading the entire Columbia Team.

It was not, of course, until we had left Kabul's modern airport and started to ride toward the city that we felt we were truly in Afghanistan, a country about the size of Texas.

That's the plot. The picture on each page complements the lines below. That which cannot be said in words because of the controlled vocabulary is said in the picture. After many revisions, Mr. Alimi and Mr. Wardak were successful in churning out the six-page story, with not more than one new word per page and frequent use of the word throughout the story.

Artist, calligrapher, and mimeographer's tasks had to coordinate within a scheduled deadline. During these weeks there were phrases like "Isn't it?", "Don't we?", "Haven't they?", "Don't you think?", "Wouldn't it be better?" circulating about in the office. One of the problems I had not anticipated was that counterparts in other curriculum sections would want to help write stories. It was a delicate matter. How does one tell an Afghan that story-writing requires special talent and that it is an art carrying a discipline that not everybody has learned? It was at such times that I realized how much the experiences of the previous weeks and months had taught my counterparts. They had an understanding of the task which others in the Project did not have. Our early effort to learn what reading is all about really paid off.

Paper is in short supply in Afghanistan and therefore a valuable commodity. Nevertheless, we could hardly avoid throwing away pages and pages of stories which did not meet the standard. In any creative venture, one must be willing to reject more than he accepts. Work in the office was like that. Waste cans were filled several times a day. Chap-le-sees (Afghan errand men) would jump at every opportunity to empty a waste can of paper. One day Mr. MacMakin, our production manager, came to the office holding up a homemade paper bag made of pages from our first-grade reader. He said his wife bought apples in the fruit bazaar and the merchant placed her purchase

in this bag. I understood, then, the reason for the quick jumps of the chap-le-sees to get to the waste can first. They sold the scrap paper to merchants who in turn used it to make paper bags in which to place the purchase.

By the time the seventh story (Grandmother) was completed and accepted by designates appointed to pass judgment on stories, the vocabulary was large enough to make a more interesting story. The teacher's guide included suggestions for using the vocabulary in many related but different settings. By the time story seven was taught, children could have a reading vocabulary of at least seventy-five words. And with the word-attack skills taught in the readiness lessons and throughout the reading lessons, it was our expectation that children would already show signs of being on their own in reading. But we had to test the material on children before we could be sure. If our expectation was confirmed, we could then continue the sequence of stories as planned. And it was understood by those participating in the experiment that the teacher in the DMA would then return to the traditional materials to finish out the year.

March 21 was marked in red on the office calendar. When the red-letter day arrived, we were ready. Mr. Najand had done his homework. Twenty-five first-graders and a room full of observers were ready to watch Mr. Wardak teach the trial lessons. Because these twenty-five children were a new group and hadn't been taught the readiness lessons, Mr. Wardak's first three weeks were given to the twelve lessons getting them ready to read. Teaching twenty-five was not exactly the same as teaching ten. Nor was facing a room full of spectators the same, either. In spite of the differences, the overall results were similar. Sessions with the team

after each demonstration in which visitors learned why the children responded so well also provided opportunity to explain principles supporting both material and method. Here all four counterparts helped to explain the "why" behind what was going on. It was a good way to cement in their minds the principles on which the materials were built.

When the first story, "Asad's Ball," was introduced at the DMA, I sat in the back and attended with an interest higher than that of any other person in the room. Would these children be able to unlock the words on their own or would they have to be told? Mr. Wardak employed "organic teaching" in a way I had never seen done better. He drew on children's resources and used their ideas to achieve the next step. Whether it was the content, the plot, or the skillful way in which the stories were taught, I could not be sure, but children's interest held for periods exceeding what books say is normal for attention spans. By allowing children to read the page silently before reading it aloud, Mr. Wardak gave each child the opportunity to unlock the new word for himself. Beginning sounds of the new word and the context (the new amid other known words) certainly helped to pronounce the new word when it appeared in the sentence. Imagine the difference between having to meet only one new word on a page among other known words and having to meet eight new words, as was the case in the traditional text! And the frequency with which the new word was used in the story also helped to master the new word.

Post-sessions following each demonstration were growing in attendance. There were questions and more questions. Good questions. Teachers noted the interest displayed by children, Mrs. Nuria especially. After about the third story, Mrs. Nuria asked whether she could teach the next one. I remember earlier when Mr. Hamid and Dr. Owens registered a doubt concerning

the unusual response children gave to these materials. They had wondered how much depends upon the method and skill of the teacher to arouse these interesting responses.

"Might the experiment be more realistic if a typical teacher from the school were teaching the lessons instead of an experienced teacher like Mr. Wardak," was their question.

They were right. We needed to let the regular teachers teach the lessons before we could be sure that the material was doing what was intended.

The fourth week Mr. Wardak honored Mrs. Nuria's request. He gave her Story Four (the Mother story) and the guide for teaching it. She did well. She must have studied the guide. She did surprisingly well in drawing on the children's resources. I wondered how a teacher who had known only the "telling" approach to teaching could so quickly employ the "organic" approach. Mrs. Nuria allowed herself to get interested in the story and exuded an enthusiasm that begat the same. Children responded for her almost as well as for Mr. Wardak.

But when Mrs. Nuria asked whether we could keep her in stories for the rest of the year, that she did not wish to return to the old, I knew we couldn't. I went straight to Mr. Hamid's office in the Ministry. "What do you think? Mrs. Nuria does not want to return to the old material and asked us to keep her in stories for the rest of the year. We have only three more stories and lessons prepared. Three weeks' worth, that's all. Mr. Hamid, we can't possibly keep her supplied for the rest of the year. Do you realize how much time it takes us to churn out one lesson, let alone fourteen, which is the number of lessons it would take to finish the year?" By this time I was worked up to a pitch.

"If Mrs. Nuria is asking, you can do it," was all he said.

But at that moment I could not see it. Dr. Owens, when he observed my hesitancy, said, "A try is better than a blank." I disarmed myself and said, "We will try."

The next weeks and months kept us all on our mettle. Supervision of the lessons had to continue and by now it required only one of the counterparts to be at the school every day. The other three could give full time to the writing of the fourteen lessons. The question periods following the sessions at school continued. It was during these periods that students, inspectors, other teachers, and fathers of children (who frequently stopped by) were exposed to the new materials and learned why they aroused such interest.

Once, while children were reading aloud the spoken parts in the Grandfather story, the teacher asked them to read the words in the way Grandfather really said them. Their voices responded beautifully, and instead of the usual monotone, children's voices inflected to fit the tone of Grandfather as well as the feeling. One of the fathers said during the session following, "But that's not reading. That's talking."

The sun rose and set every day. And we at the office also rose and set. We gave the "try" our best effort. I'm glad we tried. The next several years confirmed our decision. It was the right thing to do. It was possible.

X.

A TOTALLY NEW SYSTEM EMERGING

Thus it was, that after nine months, the four counterparts, two artists (a second artist was hired to keep up with increased volume of work), and two calligraphers began to feel rewarded. Part of their time was spent at the DMA observing children and teachers, but most of the time they were in the office creating ideas and developing them into stories. Charts, flash cards, worksheets, and other supplementary materials to go along with the lessons in the reader were being prepared.

Life in the office during those nine months was lived at a frantic pace. It was gay, colorful, and a little mad. Had everything been kept in storage next door to our office, the deadlines could have been met with quieter decorum. But the sheets of cardboard for charts and the stencils for mimeographing were stored in supply cupboards at the University (four miles to the west end of Kabul). And to acquire these, one had to obtain requisitions with proper signatures plus a permit to order a van with driver to go to the University to pick up the order. Many times I discovered that both vans were on errands for other specialists within our project. I finally caught on that vans must be reserved days ahead of time and for specific hours and minutes, like 10:13 or 3:18 or some other time slot on the reservation form. There were times when I took my own car to pick up an order. And there were also times when not even that solution worked. One day when our schedule was abnormally tight, I rushed out to

the University in my car to pick up fifteen stencils. The rush to get all five signatures on the request form plus the traffic jam on the Kabul streets at 2:30 in the afternoon added up to make me breathlessly insistent on quick service. The secretary calmly announced that she could not fill the order because the last stencil was given out yesterday and the new supply had not yet arrived.

"But we have to have it today," I almost shouted. "The last story of the first-grade reader is to be introduced tomorrow morning. And Mrs. Nuria has been told that there will be a representative group from the Ministry to observe the demonstration. The children each must have a copy," I continued, but in a more moderate tone.

"I am sorry," was all she said.

That was a day I could not say "Parwaa neyst" ("It doesn't matter"). What I did say I cannot remember, but I do remember that the fifteen stencils were finally obtained. Mildred Castro, administrative assistant to the Chief of Party whose office was at the University, just happened to have some extra stencils. I returned to the Ministry, gave the fifteen stencils to the typist. He cut and ran them all, Mr. Alimi assembled them, and Mr. Najand handed out the twenty-five copies to the children the next morning. Mr. Wardak spoke words of welcome to the visitors the next morning and made a short explanation about the materials and Mrs. Nuria's willingness to be the first teacher to try them on her class:

> It is important to keep in mind throughout the reading program that we are not teaching children to memorize words. We are, instead, teaching them to discover the new word using the other known words in the sentence along with the beginning sound to decode the new word. These children already know the spoken form because it is in their everyday spoken language. It is the printed form that makes the word new to them. But by employing these word-attack aids, the children are on their way to becoming independent readers. Children in this class are reading for meaning. When they recognize a new word because it

> makes sense in the sentence with other known words, we can be sure they are reading for meaning. Mrs. Nuria will introduce the new story. Watch how she makes them wonder, how she provokes their curiosity. The children know that they have to read in order to find answers. They know that Mrs. Nuria expects them to find the answers by reading. As the children read the pages silently, you will be able to tell whether they are getting the meaning. You will be even more sure when you hear them discuss the story afterwards. Mrs. Nuria will now teach the new story.

Memory is kind. I remember more about this speech which Mr. Wardak made in front of all these visitors that day than the frustrations of the day before. It is really true that all was well because it ended well.

It now appeared that children were learning to read and that the Guide was helpful to teachers teaching the lessons. But further testing was still needed before we could be sure. Morale was running high because this one year's experimentation on twenty-five children bore signs of success. When Mr. Hamid suggested that we prepare something similar for Pashtu-speaking schools located in the southern provinces, I did not need to respond this time with "But Mr. Hamid, we can't possibly...," because there were now four counterparts who would speak for themselves.

"Why yes, certainly," I heard one of them say. And I knew at once that they knew what they were saying. They knew that writing stories within a controlled vocabulary about everyday experiences of children and their families could be done. I knew that it still would not be easy. Writing is never easy. But the four understood a lot more about how to write than when they wrote their first story. They also understood more about how children learn and how to teach in the way they learn than when they observed that first lesson being taught nine months before.

Pashtu-speaking provinces are in southern Afghanistan. The climate is milder. Winters are not as cold. The school term for the southern provinces begins in September and ends in May. We had time to prepare

sets of stories, for it was still February. The summer-fall term at the DMA in Kabul would end in December. The southern provinces school term fell within the fall, winter, and spring months, thus beginning in September and ending in May.

I thought the transition into the Pashtu language would be merely one of translating the Farsi reader into Pashtu. But my counterparts knew better. Children's experiences in these provinces differ enough from the experiences in the northern provinces that even names of the central characters would have to be changed. We went through a similar process of name selection that we used in selecting Asad, Nazo, and Latif. But it did not take as long. The three names agreed upon for the Pashtu were: Sado, Malalai, and Zamarak. The sequence of stories remained the same, but details within the stories featured more the activities of field, orchard, and garden.

Boys and girls in the southern provinces attend separate schools and I did not realize that this separation would make a difference in the content of the stories until we took the harvest story to Jalalabad to try on two separate first-grade classes. The story featured a grain harvest with a stack of fodder in the center and oxen circling round to trample out the grain. Miss Habiba, teacher in the girls' school, very unsuccessfully introduced the story on October 26. She asked the questions given in the guide but got no response. And her enthusiasm was as limp as the children's. I thought to myself, here is a story which connects neither teacher nor taught. The counterparts and I then walked over to the boys' school. The same story produced quite the opposite effect. Mr. Abdul Shour, teacher in the boys' school, also followed the guide. What a difference his enthusiasm made! Both teacher and children were alive. One could tell that children

in this class had experience with threshing grain. They had gone often with their fathers to the threshing floor. Mr. Shour, likewise, had experience threshing grain. The new words in the story were no problem here. Because of their direct experience with threshing, the children recognized the new words easily. In the discussion hour following these two class periods, I asked Miss Habiba whether a housekeeping story would be better in place of this field story for girls' schools. Her reply was, "I did not know what my father and brothers did in the field. Now I think I know enough to ask them questions. I think the story is a good one to show me and my pupils what goes on in the field."

I thought, "Of course. Why not? Stories should extend experience as well as confirm it." The threshing story stayed in the Pashtu reader, but several additional suggestions were placed in the guide to help teachers in the girls' schools to connect with field experience.

Thus was witnessed what leaders in the Ministry had hoped would be true of the new materials--continuity and extension of learning through constant effort to reach agreement among teachers, children, and community.

In every six-week visit to the schools in Jalalabad and Kandahar, we found that the lessons accomplished the objectives set for them. We also found that comprehension skills moved naturally from simple to complex, near to far, immediate to remote. Comprehension skill grew out of actual learning experiences. As long as the materials connected with the experience of the children, the children learned. These periodic visits to the schools also provided opportunity to work as we travelled. The seven- and nine-hour drives to Jalalabad and Kandahar gave to the counterparts and me many an uninterrupted committee meeting. Enroute to

But it was not at all like Texas. Afghanistan is an ancient land, situated between two different but equally bright cultures--Iran and India. I felt I was placed in a "time tunnel" and transported back thousands of years.

Kabul streets were crowded. Donkeys carrying huge loads could be seen everywhere. Cows, oxen, fat-tailed sheep, goats--even camels--were being driven down the streets of Kabul. And there were also heavy wooden carts pulled by coolies, merchants selling wares in tiny shops, women in "chaadry" looking something like ghosts as they glided silently about! (It has been only a few years since Afghan women have been allowed to leave their homes without the all-enveloping chaadry. Many women were still being seen veiled on the streets of Kabul.) Streets were choking in dust. Some merchants were seen with a bucket, sprinkling water on the street in front of their shops.

Most of the people appeared to be desperately poor, but seldom did we see any signs of hunger. Most of the people looked adequately fed, even the children.

Then there were the buses and trucks. The buses defy description. One bus looked as though everyone got on at the same time and kept on getting on long after it was full. Riders were hanging onto the sides, back, and top. So heavy were the loads that the wheel-base on many of the buses had pulled away from normal alignment. The trucks looked like something else. Gaily painted with every imaginable design, they resembled something belonging to the circus.

Taxis, well, all I could observe was that they had horns and wild drivers. Some had IXAT printed on the front of the cab. Friends in our

the schools we discussed what we hoped to see when teachers introduce the new story. For instance, would we see children's ability to unlock new words and would there be evidence that they really comprehend the meaning of the stories? On the return, we discussed what we saw, the triumphs as well as the failures, and the necessary alterations to be made in the story and/or teacher's guide.

The new methods and materials, with their increased emphasis on pupil interaction and thought-provoking modes of inquiry, were beginning to be stressed in the teacher-training colleges. Within the Project, a major decision by officials in the Ministry gave special importance to the teacher's guide produced for each textbook. Moreover, the distribution policy called for the teacher and inspector or administrator to receive a teacher's edition and guide for each different text. This special edition would include both a copy of the pupil text and the teacher's guide bound together in a single volume. Research findings showed a marked success by pupils when teachers followed the suggestions in the teacher's guide and less success when the guide was not followed.

But the teacher's guide was not the only component with which to insure effective teaching. Pre-service and in-service training were also important components.

The kinds of pre-service and in-service training that were necessary to insure that materials would be taught effectively was a decision to be made by the Ministry. During the previous year at the DMA, 176 student teachers at the twelfth-grade level and 329 student teachers at the thirteenth-grade level were observing the new materials and methods of teaching during their student teaching periods. The results were highly

encouraging to laboratory school teachers and Ministry officials. Children were learning to read with understanding.

But the success of the Language Arts materials depended not only on the quality of the new curriculum materials but also on how effectively they were used in the schools.

Because of the success of the Kabul pilot-group for testing the children's ability to read with meaning, it was decided by Ministry officials to try the same technique in training teachers. Therefore, at the beginning of the 1970-1971 school term in Jalalabad and Kandahar, the Pashto I materials were introduced to teachers by the "mini-school" approach: A counterpart from the Language Arts Division was sent to each school in the centers chosen to experiment with the materials. Every afternoon he taught one lesson to one of the first grades in the system, regular teachers observing. The next morning the regular teachers taught the same lesson to their respective pupils in their own classrooms. After about four weeks of this careful, methodical training, the regular teachers were considered capable to proceed on their own until the next visit by the counterparts, six weeks later.

In addition to the four weeks of demonstration lessons taught by the counterparts, UNESCO had been conducting a course for in-service teachers on basic perspectives, principles, and teaching methods related to the new curriculum at the Academy for Teachers, graduates of which then became teachers in the training centers.

During the Spring Term break, April 1971, at the request of Mr. Bangt Eckevall, UNESCO teacher education advisor in Kandahar, the Language Arts Section offered a two-day seminar to teachers and students at the Kandahar DMA. The purpose of the seminar was to familiarize future teachers with

the new approaches and materials in Language Arts. The seminar included lectures, exhibits, demonstrations, and discussions. At the end of each session, an evaluation questionnaire was filled out by those in attendance. Reaction to the seminar was strongly favorable.

A year later, on another set of trips to evaluate progress and to help teachers in service, Mr. Wardak and Dr. Ralph Fields, Chief of Party of the TCCU Team, travelled to Kandahar, while Mr. Tarin and Mr. Najand travelled to Jalalabad. On both of these trips the counterparts participated in two seminars for teacher educators, laboratory school teachers, inspectors, and administrators. The seminars, which were co-sponsored by the Teacher Education Department of the Ministry and UNESCO, featured work in pre-reading and beginning reading methods.

Preparatory to putting the materials out for field tryout, a comprehensive orientation program was organized for teachers who were to be involved in the experiment. This was held at the Lycee in Kabul. A few days after this seminar, another seminar was conducted at the Ministry for Headmasters and Inspectors to acquaint them with the new approach. Emphasis in all the training programs was on demonstration classes and on active involvement of the teachers in using the materials and applying what they learned to their own classroom conditions.

Adaptation of these pre-service and in-service seminars became a continuing and permanent part of the Project. It was hoped that the curriculum would adjust to the changing conditions of Afghanistan. It was also hoped that appropriate adjustments would continually be made in the training of Afghan educators. As a result of these training sessions, a permanent plan for orienting and training teachers was approved by the

Ministry of Education and a mobile training team was created to travel throughout the 26 provinces and the ten Teacher Training Institutions to train the staffs of the Provincial Directors of Education and the Teacher Educators. In addition, headmasters were included among those to be trained because they also supervise and train teachers. Moreover, as Inspectors make their yearly evaluation of teachers based upon the effective use of the new materials, it follows that they, too, must be trained in the new materials.

Evaluation is an integral part of the educative process, specifically the teaching-learning process. I was satisfied that the evaluation guidelines which most of these supervising groups needed were presented in the teacher's guide in a manner that could be understood and utilized by both trained and untrained. The secret lay in exposing teachers to the evaluation techniques which were written into every lesson. Good teachers evaluate pupil performance every day. Learning experiences and activities for individual learners were adequately provided in the guide.

Emphasis in the old curriculum material was to memorize rather than to understand. The old did not emphasize interests and experiences with which pupils identify and learn to know themselves as thinkers. The pupils were measured by their ability to recite the entire textbook, an achievement which admitted them to the next higher class. It had no direct or vital relationship to the quality of living outside of school, thus disqualifying them for the kinds of services the nation most needed.

Only time will tell how well the new curriculum will assist individual Afghans to do better those socially desirable things which they are going to do anyway. In this new emerging system reading and writing skills are

considered to be absolute requirements toward the better life. Children should not have to wait until they are grown to experience something better. We believe that every day a child can experience a better existence because he is becoming an independent thinker. He is learning to make wise choices. He is learning to work and play with others of his own age. He is learning to reach out and provide for his own needs. Reading and writing help him to realize his potential.

XI.

RESEARCH REVEALS....

It is important to agree, whether we like it or not, that a spotlight is always playing upon the school. It is true in the States, and it is beginning to be true in Afghanistan. In America, the spotlight is held alternately by other school systems, by parents and grandparents, and by the neighbors next door. More happily and probably more often, its intent is to find honest answers to honest questions. In Afghanistan, however, there has not been a periodic evaluation of the system--its curriculum and texts. Schools in Afghanistan have, for too many years, been a recapitulation of the past. Teachers teach as they were taught, using the same materials. But now that schools are experimenting with a material which seeks to produce literate students in contrast to students who know little more than to recite from memory the texts, questions are being asked, honest questions in search of honest answers. Among the questions, these six are heard most freuently:

1. Why does learning to read have to begin with a series of readiness lessons?

2. Why is alphabet mastery so important to reading?

3. Why must stories using the alphabet in phrases and sentences be taught concurrently with the alphabet?

4. Why are teachers urged to follow the teacher's guide which accompanies the materials?

5. Why are children taught to write from dictation?

6. Why is reading comprehension so essential in developing a literate citizenry?

There must be agreement also, that what is done in the Afghan schools, whether in Language Arts or in any other area, is not just the business of the Ministry or the business of the Project Team who produced the material. It is everybody's business, and everybody has a right to know what schools are trying to do for children in Afghanistan, how they are going about it, and what success they are having.

And, finally, it is important to agree that teachers become perplexed when they face innumerable problems for which there is no immediate solution. Seven-year-old Abdul refuses to talk; ten-year-old Khalil will have no part in the school activity unless he can dominate it; Razio develops a stammer in second grade; Malalai, although admittedly not the best reader and writer, cannot accept defeat in the sixth-grade reading and writing examinations. Why? What is back of such behavior? Teachers want to know. Professional training and experience in finding solutions to such problems up to this time has not been regarded as a necessary skill for teachers in Afghanistan.

One idea that stands out in the earlier chapters of this book is the need to look upon each Afghan child as a living, growing person whose growth is conditioned by home, school, and province, and whose progress to adulthood is the product of the mutual understanding and effort of all three influences.

Understanding comes first. Whatever the schools are doing, whether right or wrong, must be understood by parents and authorities at the Ministry if sympathetic relationships are to be established.

How can mutual understanding be acquired? By talking, by discussing, by questioning; in short, by observing children in the schools and seeing how they "light up" as they discover answers. Parents and administrators

want to see classroom activities adapted to the growth of the children. They want to see them learning cooperation and courtesy as well as hygienic principles. They want to see children expressing courtesy to teachers, shopkeepers, and field workers. When they visit school they want to see how school experiences broaden children's understanding and vocabularies. Experience charts, blackboard exercises, and flashcards using words of the Language Arts texts make book-reading come easy. The stories reveal that children have been studying their homes and their community. On some classroom walls they may see a safety mural and a science exhibit on getting ready for winter. In another classroom they may examine pupil-made books on their individual families.

From seeing evidence of language activities on a tour of classrooms to seeing and hearing the children in action, parents are facing the first logical step toward acquiring understanding.

The new materials were in the schools of Afghanistan long enough to begin a concerted effort in testing in order to know whether the materials are doing the job of teaching reading. The Research Division of the Curriculum-Textbook Project, under the supervision of Dr. Sayers of the TCCU Team, selected members from the division to prepare evaluation instruments for obtaining this kind of information.

The team prepared a test from a 116-word vocabulary which was common to both the new materials and the traditional textbook. The test consisted of three parts: reading comprehension, dictation writing, and vocabulary. Reading comprehension of the test consisted of three short stories and questions in multiple-choice form. The second part of the test was a dictation passage; and the third an exercise on thirty-two vocabulary

words. It was assumed that the pupils to be tested would have completed the first two grades of the elementary school.

The first passage contained ten sentences averaging 5.5 vocabulary words followed by six multiple-choice completion items. The English translation of the story is as follows:

SPRING

The weather is good in Spring. The land is green with grass. Everywhere red and white flowers are seen. Farmers go to their land. They work their gardens, too. Farmers cultivate corn. Shepherds are taking their flocks to the mountains. Students are going to the schools. Birds are making nests. Everybody is happy.

Questions:

1. What kinds of flowers are seen everywhere?

    a. Red and white
    b. Green and white
    c. Blue and white

2. What things do farmers cultivate?

    a. Flowers
    b. Grass
    c. Corn

3. Where does the shepherd take his flock?

    a. To the city
    b. To the mountains
    c. To the garden

4. What do birds make?

    a. Nests
    b. House
    c. Land

5. How is everybody in Spring?
   a. Good
   b. Sick
   c. Happy

The second reading passage consisted of a seven-sentence story. Each sentence averaged seven vocabulary words. There were five multiple-choice questions to be answered by the students. The English translation of the passage is as follows:

AHMAD

Ahmad is a shepherd. He has many sheep and a camel. He takes his flock to the green hill every day. When he takes his flock out, he looks around. He sits in the shade. He takes his flock back to the house during the night. When he comes home, he feels hungry. After he eats, he goes to bed.

Questions:

1. How many sheep does Ahmad have?
   a. Four
   b. Many
   c. Three
2. Where does he take his flock?
   a. To the green hill
   b. To the black hill
   c. To the white hill
3. When does he take his flock home?
   a. During the day time
   b. Every time
   c. During the night time
4. How is Ahmad when he comes home?
   a. Happy
   b. Hungry
   c. Sick

vehicle explained it to me. After all, in Afghanistan you read from right to left, hence TAXI in Farsi would naturally read IXAT!

Kabul was full of sounds. At night the dogs barked. Dogs are half wild and run about in packs. In the daytime there was the constant honking of horns. People, donkeys, cars, and cattle; sheep, goats, and bicycles--all claiming the right-of-way. I was told that one cannot drive in Kabul without a good horn. Add yet crowing roosters, braying donkeys, booming cannon every noonday, and laughter of children playing in the streets. I agreed. Kabul is full of sounds.

I learned later the challenge of driving in winter. It is not so much what you do as what the Afghans do. Ice and snow mean nothing to an Afghan driver. He seems not to see danger. He may slip and slide in every direction. If there are other cars, buses, and trucks spinning around, all drivers simply go whichever way they are facing until they get turned around again, then smile, wave gaily, and rev up their motors, driving faster than ever. Only once in the whole two years of my stay did my car get sideswiped.

The language dare not go without comment. My sponsor, Mildred Castro, executive secretary to the Chief of Party, had time to give me an idea of how difficult the language is. Even though nationals, for whom Farsi is the mother tongue, claim English to be the most difficult language ever spoken, I had my doubts.

Afghanistan has two major languages, Farsi and Pashtu. And, in addition, there are about 200 dialects within the two languages. For example, the written language and the spoken language are not always the same. When speaking, the word for water is "ow." But when writing, the word for water is "ab." The traditional textbooks are written, I was told, without

5. What does Ahmad do after he eats?

   a. He sleeps
   b. He sits
   c. He talks

The third part of the reading comprehension test consisted of six sentences averaging seven vocabulary words. The story was read silently by the pupils. The English translation of the passage is as follows:

AHMAD'S FATHER

Ahmad has a father. His father has a garden and some land. He has flowers and bushes in the garden. He keeps his flowers with much interest. Ahmad helps his father. Ahmad shovels and his father plows.

Questions:

1. What is the man in this story?

   a. Ahmad's teacher
   b. Ahmad's father
   c. Ahmad's shepherd

2. How many gardens had Ahmad's father?

   a. Four
   b. Three
   c. One

3. What does Ahmad's father have in his garden?

   a. Flowers and bushes
   b. Flowers and grasses
   c. Flowers and corn

4. How does Ahmad help his father?

   a. Plowing
   b. Shoveling
   c. Talking

The fourth part of the test was a six-sentence dictation exercise comprised of thirty-two vocabulary words. Each of the sentences was read three times by the tester. The English translation is as follows:

DICTATION

Ahmad is in the second grade. He likes everybody. He keeps his hands clean. He listens to his teacher. He plays with his classmates. He helps his mother.

Students were asked to use the reverse side of the reading passage, Ahmad, to write the exercise.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE TESTS

Eleven second-grade classes in Language Arts (six experimental in Jalalabad, five non-experimental in Kandahar) were tested by Research Section members. Experimental classes were those using the new materials. Control (non-experimental) classes were those using traditional materials. Students were taken to an empty classroom in their school and seated in separate seats. Each class had one person from the Research Division and two Higher Teachers College students who were recruited to help monitor the tests. They were told not to talk, nor to share answers. After the students were organized, a practice test was given with questions like the ones in the reading comprehension test. A copy was written on the board. The tester told children to read the story silently and then answer the questions. A child was called to the blackboard to illustrate the instructions to the whole class. They read the passage, placed their fingers on the first question, and marked the correct answer with a circle (O). The tester observed their answers to make sure that each child understood the procedure.

Satisfied that all the children understood directions, the tester then distributed the tests.

Reading passages were distributed separately to children so that different passages were given to children sitting near to each other. This meant that if two children were sitting at the same table, one would have the "Spring" passage and the other would have "Ahmad's Father" passage. When all students were finished with all the parts, the pencils and papers were collected by the tester.

RESULTS

Both Experimental and Control classes were tested by the same procedure. The sample consisted of 193 students in the Experimental classes and 173 in the Control classes. The results from the various schools were scored and an average percentage of correct responses for all students was found for each category of school and each type of test (reading comprehension, dictation, and vocabulary). Students in the Experimental group had an average of 54 percent as compared to a 27 percent average in the Control group. While greater achievement of the Experimental classes is apparent, the reader might express concern over the relatively low difference. Actually, the causes of such scores are clear. No "passing" score had been set previous to the test. The scores were predictably low as the classes involved had not been exposed to the new first-grade materials from the beginning of the year and were thus entering a program "in progress" rather than from the beginning. This being the first formal comparative testing ever done in Afghanistan, the Research Team was satisfied. They saw the apparent achievement of the pupils who had experience with the new materials even though they had not started from

the beginning.[1]

The Research members knew now that the new materials held an advantage. The next attempt to compare reading scores was made at the third-grade level with a midyear testing of 1,266 third-grade pupils in Mazar-i-Sharif. This testing period showed that pupils using the new Language Arts trial materials had substantially higher achievement scores than pupils using the old materials in reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and vocabulary skill.

Pretests given at the beginning of the year established that the two groups were closely comparable in achievement levels to start with; hence the considerably better showing by the group with the new materials was clearly attributable to the use of those materials rather than to an equivalent initial advantage on the part of that group.[2]

The results of the testing in Mazar-i-Sharif were consistent with the results of testing the Language Arts materials in other regions and for other grades, and represent additional evidence in support of the conclusion that pupils using the new materials have, as a consequence, a decisive learning advantage over pupils using the old.

Similar testing continued throughout the grades for the next two years. As fast as the texts were published and distributed, tests were prepared and administered.

---

[1]From Mid-Year Evaluation of Second Grade. Pashtu Trial Materials in Kandahar and Jalalabad. Curriculum Test Department of Publications, Ministry of Education, Kabul, Afghanistan, 1973.

[2]From Mid-Year Evaluation of Third-Grade Dari Trial Materials in Mazar-i-Sharif. Research Section of Department of Publications, Ministry of Education, Kabul, Afghanistan, March 1975.

According to Dr. Ralph Fields:

> The old materials with respect to content showed a lack of dealing with modern conditions. The scope and sequence was simply a hodgepodge of what textbook writers of the past had seen fit to put into their texts. Teaching strategies did not exist. There was pressure of memorization with stern punishment for lack of achievement and evaluation was based on recitation of the text.
>
> The new materials reflect an increased concern for providing learning experiences which are demonstrably useful to the pupil in building a better life for himself and for his family. Related to this concern is a shift in emphasis from passive rote learning to active inquiry and problem-solving, and from group learning to individualized learning.[3]

Dr. Richard Whittemore supports the Fields conclusion by adding:

> Taken all together, these new curriculum materials are calculated to stimulate the children to think for themselves about what they discover in their environment. If, as I believe, the springboard for development is a population that can examine itself and its possibilities in rational terms, and are aware that problems are solved only by asking relevant questions and testing their answers empirically, then these materials are appropriate to the educational goals of Afghanistan.[4]

The significant discovery after two years of comparative testing is that there is a decided advantage associated with use of the new materials at all levels through grade six. Moreover, advantage has been cumulative in character in that the longer the new materials have been used, the wider the achievement gap between the classes using the new materials and classes using the old.

The experimental classes where pupils have been using the new in successive grades for several years have so far left behind the Control groups that the relative learning losses experienced by the latter seems almost incurable. Following is a summary of comparative scores of grades 1,

---

[3] Ralph R. Fields, Ex-Chief-of-Party, Curriculum Project, Afghanistan, 1972. (Personal letter to Mr. Gul Jan Wardak.)

[4] Richard Whittemore, "Introduction to Recent Innovation in Curriculum Materials," Afghan National Workshop on Curriculum for Development, August 16, 1976, p. 3.

2, and 3 for the Experimental and Control groups tested from July 22 to February 1975:

Grade	Subject	Number	Skills	Experimental	Control
1	Dari	80	Reading Comp.	85%	58%
			Listening Comp.	93%	81%
			Dictation	73%	47%
1	Pashtu	147	Reading Comp.	46%	30%
			Dictation	41%	14%
2	Dari	697	Reading Comp.	48%	37%
			Vocabulary	62%	43%
2	Pashtu	356	Reading Comp.	38%	28%
			Dictation	44%	35%
3	Dari	771	Reading Comp.	66%	37%
			Dictation	50%	40%
3	Pashtu	565	Reading Comp.	66%	44%
			Dictation	63%	60%

The fourth-grade language materials, similar to the first-, second-, and third-grade materials, also proved to be more effective in learning achievement than the old materials. Pupils using the new had higher scores than pupils using the old. One may conclude, therefore, that these results reflect a sound curriculum with adequate curriculum materials.

Results of the end-of-year evaluation of the fifth- and sixth-grade Dari and Pashtu classes likewise showed scores all substantially higher for pupils using the new. Dr. Richard Whittemore, on an occasion in 1975 when a set of the first-grade books was presented to the Minister of Education, stated: "The project has delivered what, in Afghan terms, is a truly revolutionary set of textbooks to the Afghan children all across the country. The new government has given its people tangible evidence that educational reform is more than Jeshyn Day rhetoric."

The development of curriculum and curriculum materials is a continuous process. Changes in future years will be necessary because social, economic, and political developments demand that changes be brought to curriculum. It is hoped that educators in Afghanistan will keep abreast of the changes and continually update the texts as well as the methods for teaching them. There is evidence that Afghan children will not drop out of school at the third-grade level but will continue through grade eight. And it is expected that many will go on to high school and beyond. Afghanistan is capable of producing and directing its own system of education. The interest was always there; now the know-how is also there.

XII.

VISITORS FROM WASHINGTON

There is helpful guidance to be found in criteria accumulated as a result of careful testing. Yet, there comes a time when educators want to know more than the comparative percentage figures of children's achievement. Figures do reveal answers to some of their questions. But there are questions such as: How did it happen; what kind of help was given; why the new materials do what old materials did not; how teachers learned to teach the new in ways that caused children to learn. Answers to these questions were not so easily come by. But to the question of printing and distributing the material, answers would be easily shown.

A major achievement in the project was the printing and distribution of the new first-grade Language Arts textbooks and teacher's guides. Specifically, the first order included:

a.	First-Grade Dari Reading Readiness and First-Grade Reader (bound together) - - - - - - - - - - - - - -	250,000 copies
b.	First-Grade Language Arts Teacher's Guide - - - -	5,000 copies
c.	First-Grade Dari Language Skill Book - - - - - - -	250,000 copies
d.	Charts for Dari Readers - - - - - - - - - - - - - -	5,000 copies
	Total - - - - - - - -	510,000 copies

And when the Pashtu order (which is identical to the above) was added, there was something like 1,020,000 textbooks to be distributed among all the Afghan primary schools.

Through the extraordinary efforts of the Afghan Press, the Ministry of Education, and USAID-Afghanistan and other concerned Ministries, the

books were proofed, printed, and delivered to Kabul on time for distribution within the first month of the 1975 school term. I should like to mention especially Messrs. Robert MacMakin, TCCU Production Specialist; Sanford Cobb, TCCU Distribution Consultant; and Daud Shah Aini, Director General of Distribution, whose remarkable tenacity and endurance saved the operation again and again as one or another obstacle threatened to bring it to a halt.

By mid-May there was evidence that the textbooks and guides had reached even the country's most remote schools. On April 30, a Project team visited Chagha Serai in the foothills of Nuristan some five hours' drive from Jalalabad, the Nangrahar provincial capital. Just outside of Chagha Serai the team observed a Mullah-teacher at a small hill school using the Pashtu language materials and teacher's guide. Another team found the books in use at Moqur and Shajuie schools in a rural area between Kandahar and Kabul. All first-grade children there had the books, and their teachers were using the guides. In Zabul Province the team stopped to watch some men cleaning a kariz (underground irrigation tunnel). When the workers discovered that their visitors were from the Ministry of Education, one of them pointed to a distant village and announced proudly that the school there had the New Republican textbooks.

On June 10, United States Ambassador Theodore Eliot and Chief-of-Party Richard Whittemore visited first-grade classrooms of three schools in Herat. There they found new textbooks in the hands of every first-grade pupil, guides on every teacher's desk, and charts on the walls of every classroom.

These observations, in addition to official Ministry of Education reports, warrant the conclusion that the goal set in the contract with

USAID and the Afghan Press had been reached. At a small ceremony on July 6, Ambassador Eliot formally presented a set of the new books to Professor Abdul Qayum, the Minister of Education.

Meanwhile, the Project's day-to-day work on manuscripts for textbooks and guides for grades three through six continued. As the Book Production Status Charts (which hung in each office) continued to show, the worst bottlenecks were in the Review Committee and the In-Press stages. There were no obvious solutions to these problems, but I think it can be said that the team's frequent discussions with the Ministry officials bore fruit and aroused new initiatives. We were about to make a major breakthrough in our effort to provide the children of Afghanistan with a new kind of education.

And because it was so new, the momentum of this news carried all the way to Washington. Throughout the years, there were many visitors from Columbia University, American University at Beirut, UNESCO, New England Reading Association representatives, to name only a few.

But I think it was the delegation from Washington, along with USAID executives in Kabul, who furnished the occasion which helped us discover that what we were doing was really helping Afghans to help themselves.

Dr. Whitten, Dr. Lange, and Dr. Fields (TCCU Project Executives), and Mr. Hamid, Afghan Director of the Project, plus two of my counterparts and I, journeyed with our Washington visitors to Kandahar and to Jalalabad to visit schools where the materials were being taught. It was near the middle of the term for these southern schools. Children had covered about half of their textbooks. In every school--fourteen in all--questions like these were asked by the Washington group:

--Can children read the pages when they see the words for the first time?

punctuation or space between words. I formed a quick image of how this would complicate my assignment: ASYOUCANWELLIMAGINETHATWOULDMAKELEARNINGTOREAD QUITEDIFFICULT. I hadn't yet seen the Farsi language in written form. So long as I was in my present state of shock, it was kind of Mildred not to introduce the written language just yet.

Mildred kept up a steady stream of conversation as we drove through the main part of the city. Some of her descriptions were coherent, some were not. She would start a sentence and not finish it, giving way to another extraordinary detail we were passing. On both sides of the road were deep "juies," whose stench I had been smelling all along since leaving the airport. Afghanistan has no municipal sewage system. The city's garbage and human waste is dumped into the "juies." Animals drink from them; children splash around in them; Afghan gardens are watered from them; people use them as quick "rest-stops." Mildred quickly added that the "juies," most of them, are periodically flooded to flush away the refuse. I twisted about inside but said nothing.

We were now passing along the main street of Old Kabul, Jade-Maiwan, past the busiest bazaars. There were those ghost-like creatures in "chaadry." I asked Mildred about the chaadry, for I had read that the modernization era had removed the chaadry from most women of Kabul. She explained it this way:

"I suspect the Afghan government, in its wanting to be modern, wanted foreigners to think this, and that the State Department which published much of the information about Afghanistan went along with the reports of the 'passing chaadry.'"

Schoolgirls seemed to be everywhere, too. Their long black braids fell below their waists which lent emphasis to their black-jumper-and-white-blouse uniforms. Mildred told me that girls do not enter chaadry and the

--Do they understand what they read?

--Can they identify the new words when written on the chalkboard?

--Do they enjoy reading? Are they interested?

--Are they able to discuss related ideas extending beyond the text?

--How many words and how well can they write the new words and ideas?

--Are teachers learning to teach the new method?

My counterparts answered in the affirmative all of these questions saying, "Watch and you'll see for yourself."

Teachers in these schools, all of them, were given the new stories the day before we visited. They received the copies the night before and had time to prepare their lessons with the help of the teacher's guide. The visitors saw children reading silently the new story. Proof that children knew what they read was exhibited in the animated responses given to questions teachers asked following the silent reading. When teachers asked questions relating to the story and to children's experiences in home and village, Dr. Whitten said, "Now the teacher is really making them think."

From class to class, and from school to school, the results were similar. When Dr. Kenneth Toepfer of the Washington team asked, "Are the teachers learning the new methods?" Mr. Wardak, one of my counterparts, said, "Why, yes. They have the guide to help them. Teachers know how to ask provocative questions which make children want to read to find the answers." Mr. Wardak spoke with confidence as he continued to answer the question. "The demonstration lessons during the workshops and seminars which were held prior to the opening of school term were other ways we used to help teachers. When teachers see the quick response children give to good questions, they want to learn how to do it too. Afghan teachers are

quick to imitate the persons doing the demonstration lessons when they see the children responding in this way."

And to Dr. Toepfer's next question, "How is it possible that you are getting pupils to respond so well?" I heard the Afghans say, "We did it ourselves."

I turned that response over and over in my mind as we walked around the school and across the road to another first-grade class in session at the boys' school in Jalalabad. (It's only in Kabul that boys and girls are together in the same schools.) Again the question was put to the Afghans after the group observed the boys' class which had performed just as admirably as the girls. "How is it possible that...," and I heard Mr. Hamid and Mr. Wardak telling them, "We did it ourselves."

There was that response again! I wondered why I was surprised when I heard it. I should have been pleased, not surprised. Was it not for this very purpose that the TCCU team had come to Afghanistan? Had we not worked together for two years, and had not my predecessors worked together with the Afghans for even more years than that, hoping to see the day the Afghans themselves would take over? I recalled a similar surprise I had in my first year of teaching in the States. I had helped a second-grade girl write a report of a field trip and in the same period, a second-grade boy with an arithmetic problem. It was the boy who, after he had discovered how, said, "Thank you, Miss Kauffman, for helping me, but I won't need you anymore." At the time I thought it to be the highest compliment I had ever received. I knew but I never knew I knew that there is only one kind of help and that is helping others to help themselves. And in a first-grade classroom in Afghanistan I heard the Afghans telling the visitors from Washington, "We did it ourselves." I knew then that I knew.

Two years ago when I began my assignment to teach Afghans to write Language Arts curriculum materials for the public schools of Afghanistan, the task seemed formidable. There were those moments when the project looked to me like "Heads you win, tails you lose." If the project succeeded, the Afghans would get the credit, but if it went down the drain, it would be my fault because my name was associated with the Language Arts division of the textbook project.

I knew, too, that in matters of learning to read, one could not expect immediate results. Russian programs in Afghanistan usually showed the immediate results. The Russians built a huge bakery in Kabul along with vast wheat storage facilities. Street paving was also done by the Russians, and the people could see first-hand what was being done. My contribution in the curriculum text project was on a long-term basis, and its result was not so visible and certainly could not be as immediate.

Perhaps the visitors from Washington served us all a good turn by asking how it happened. To hear the Afghans taking the credit for the success of the Language Arts materials was another way of saying to me, "Thank you for helping us, but we don't need you anymore." The only right which one culture has to penetrate another is when the association becomes the means of releasing the creative ability of nationals "to do it themselves." From research studies (and there have been many such studies since I left Afghanistan) it can certainly be concluded that the nationals did learn to help themselves. The look of satisfaction, belief, and pride that shone on the faces of the Afghans when they claimed the credit for the project was one I hope never to forget. It was the "rightest thing" I have ever observed.

XIII.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

And now it is another September, but it is 1971. Almost two years since our arrival in Afghanistan. How far away the goal seemed them! As I near completion of my two-year commitment with the Columbia Team to teach nationals to write curriculum materials, it throws me into quite an extensive "think-piece." My thoughts may come in sporadic spurts. I want them to travel backward over the two years. There are, of course, many people and happenings which have not been included in the account thus far. But now, as I think back, I am touched again with the fever of it all. Thinking about those first meetings and impressions, I am swept up in the drama of it. Drama gets into the bloodstream when people are real. And Afghanistan's people are real, their grown-ups as well as their children.

Putting my mind back into the beginning days and reconstructing how things seemed to me then, I realize how far I have come. The revelation is brilliant, almost like a lightning flash.... I see desks in those classrooms with their scratches and stains, blackboards with the black worn off, undressed bulletin boards, dirt floors, few windows. And suddenly everything lights up. Windows in classrooms are not as essential as windows of the mind. And there is evidence that reading, the ability to read, is opening the windows of children's minds.

I recall the stabilizing influence of Mother during the last two years. My mother (whom I haven't mentioned since Chapter II) was always there each day when I returned from the office, as well as from extended visits to the schools in Kandahar, Jalalabad, and Herat. She was the listener I needed. In fact, she got caught up in the excitement and even the pathos (depending on my experience of the day or the week) to the extent that she can, to this day, recall incidents of office and schoolroom almost as well as though she were present in all the places. Mother did go along with my counterparts and me on two occasions, once to Kandahar and once to Jalalabad.

A special invitation from Mr. Hamid, Afghan director, made it possible for Mother to travel with us in the Ministry travel van to these two cities where our materials were being taught. My counterparts knew her well and respected her. It was difficult for them to believe that Mother was eighty years old. Age is revered in Afghanistan. The average span of years for people in Afghanistan is considerably lower. Mr. Hamid agreed without hesitation when Mr. Alimi suggested that we take "Mother Kauffman" along on the next trip. On both trips (seven- and nine-hour drives) Mother stood the strain, even went along into the teahouse enroute, for hot tea and nan (Afghan bread). As a result of this experience, Mother was fully convinced that children in Afghanistan were learning to read. For weeks after, Mother would keep the table conversation going with the wonder of it all. She now had experienced directly what I had been sharing with her all along.

The last two months of my mission were chock-full of things to do. Besides the Kandahar and Jalalabad seminar for teachers, headmasters, and

Provincial Directors (demonstration lessons using children from the first- and second-grades who had been taught the new materials), there were last-minute tasks at home that needed to be put into lists and time slots. There were deadlines to be met even when packing up to leave.

As we worked, both Mother and I, to bring our sojourn in this land to a close, we remembered many things--that first Christmas away from home, for instance. Mr. Obydi, a counterpart from the Research Division of the Project, invited Mother and me to spend Christmas Day at his winter home in the sunny southern part of Afghanistan. I remember that drive in and around and back of the Hindu Kush Mountain Range. There was hardly a road, just a well-worn track over rough cobblestones. Mother doubted that there was really a home out there. She rode in the back seat of my car. To me, the journey was not long, because Mr. Obydi kept up a steady stream of conversation about his family. I believed only in part all that he was telling me, until we came within sight of his estate. There they were, all thirty-four of his family--which consisted of six children, his wife, uncles, aunts, cousins, and a grandmother. We walked through a long, narrow passageway. Perched on top of the walls on either side of the passageway and around the large center structure were the thirty-some relatives who lived together here. I understood, ~~now~~ then, the meaning of "the extended family."

There were other visits in the homes of Afghans in Kabul. Mother recalled the one Mr. Najand had arranged in his home, which was not far from the Ministry. This was Mother's first experience sitting on the floor and reaching into the center of the circle for the delicious chicken and rice, flavored with all manner of spices. Mr. Najand called it pillau. Fresh fruits completed the meal, after which, in another room, we were

served hot tea and sweets. Invited also, on this occasion, were friends of Mr. Najand--husbands only. Wives of Afghan men do not accompany their husbands on social occasions. (Afghan women do not appear in mixed groups--a cultural practice.) Entertainment after the meal was given by Mr. Najand's children--songs, recitations, and dance--all of this punctuated with lively conversation which went on and on and on. Afghans can really talk! They talk whether anyone is listening or not. Mother understood why I often came home from the office so frustrated. Many a time, during those first weeks, I returned home completely exhausted. "How can I ever get a word in? Everybody talks at once!" was my oft-repeated query. I think Mother understood after this evening at Mr. Najand's. Thinking about it now, I remember why I insisted that the following two objectives be included in the first few lessons of the Reading Readiness material:

--To develop ability to listen while another is speaking.

--To develop ability to wait to speak until another has finished speaking.

And these skills were being learned, quite easily, at that, in all the classrooms using the new materials. After that evening at Mr. Najand's, I said to Mother, "Grown-ups in Afghanistan will eventually learn how to speak one at a time. They'll learn it from their children." And Mother said, "Yes, just as grown-ups in the States learn." I thought to myself: How alike people are, here and at home and everywhere--a child shall lead them.

Afghans are known for their hospitality. We were often invited to homes of Project members and to homes of friends of Project members. I like to think that some of these invitations were because of Mother. The Afghan people loved her.

Once, Mr. Wardak invited us to his home shortly after his wife had given birth to a new son. His whole family stood proudly around. I asked the mother for the privilege to hold the baby and asked, as I did so, "What is the baby's name?" (The others in the room could not speak or understand English.) Mr. Wardak then asked me what I would like to call the baby. He said that babies in their country usually are not given a name for ~~about a year~~ several months after birth. I thought for a few minutes, then asked, "How would the name Martin look and sound in Farsi?" To my surprise, Mr. Wardak said, "Good!" Later we talked about the name in the office. The counterparts agreed that Martin was not exactly an Afghan name but, if accented on the last syllable, the name would sound more Afghan-like. The office force liked the name, and Mr. Alimi noted that this name would be easy to learn to read and to write, since the letters "meem" and "tay" are among the first to be learned in the Farsi alphabet. I felt I had really scored. The counterparts were aware by now of the importance of the alphabet, especially the beginning ~~sounds of words~~ and the medial sounds of words. I hurried home that day to share this incident with Ali, our cook.

It was hard to think of leaving our faithful servants, Ali and Merza. Mother, who is excellent at baking breakfast rolls herself, admitted that we would miss Ali's breakfast rolls. Not only his rolls, but also his good beef, potato-and-carrot, roasts. And Ali could make the best roast-beef gravy to go with them! I asked Ali, after he had cooked for us a few weeks, how it happened that he could make these dishes taste so nearly like we were accustomed to. He surprised me with his answer: "I cook American meal as easily as I cook Afghan meal. I cook for American for at least seventeen years. Know what Americans like." Not only were his meals good, ~~Ali was always~~ but also on time. He served the meals graciously and cleaned up afterward with the same cheerful expertise.

Merza, the house and lawn assistant, was not as easy to communicate with, as he knew very little English. His work in the garden and flower beds in our beautiful front and back yards was as excellent as Ali's was in the kitchen and dining room. Merza took pride in keeping the lawn green. Mother had fully expected to do the work of the house herself until we learned that food preparation required specific training--Afghan domestic servants were taught the hygienic procedures of washing and sterilizing the food and the necessity of using only boiled water in all food preparation. Ali was very conscientious. He never violated a rule. And neither Mother nor I had any problems the whole time in Afghanistan with the dreaded parasite, amoeba. Some of our teams were not that fortunate. I gave the credit to Ali and Merza. It was a pleasure to pay them at the end of every month. We sometimes slipped in an extra bonus out of appreciation for their good service. We trusted them both completely. On many occasions Mother gave Ali money to buy fresh fruit and vegetables in the bazaar. He could do it much easier and could appraise values better than either Mother or I could.

Merza knew the flowers and vegetables that do well in Afghanistan soil. On one occasion Mother and Merza disagreed on when and where to plant potatoes and tomatoes. I remember that it turned out to be Merza who was right. We still laugh every time we think of the horse-manure incident. South of Kabul, about three miles from our home, was the riding-horse paddock. Merza knew about this place and warned against getting fertilizer there. He said, "Horse droppings bad. Not good on garden." Mother thought otherwise and requested that he put several empty buckets in my car and together we would go to the paddock for what Merza called "droppings." We went. We filled the buckets. Against his better judgment Merza scattered

the manure over the potatoes and tomatoes end of the garden and over the flower beds. It was really bad. The flower beds suffered, as did also the potatoes and tomatoes. Merza was too polite to say "I told you so," and we were not too proud to admit that he was right. He knew Afghanistan soil. We thanked him for warning us. After that, Merza knew that we respected his judgment.

Another time in which Merza scored was when he offered to sleep in the hallway near the front door of our home. This was after we were robbed of several valuable items from the kitchen and livingroom. Merza, whose sleeping quarters were in the back yard, was not aware that he had neglected to check the doors that night. Our house was entered. Several carpets, a coffee-maker, an electric iron, and other miscellaneous items were taken. Recently there had been frequent lootings in homes of foreigners; and always, when this happens, servants are the first to be accused. I was sure Merza was innocent, but I had to prove it to the police. The typical punishment for theft was a beating--ten to twenty stripes. I knew Merza was not guilty, so I stood before the police pleading in his behalf. Not until I signed a paper stating that I would bear the punishment myself did the patrol allow Merza to return home, acquitted. Out of gratitude for the confidence given him, Merza insisted on sleeping on a cot in the hallway in front of the door for the next three weeks. USAID put a guard on duty in our compound for additional security. I was satisfied that we were adequately protected under Merza's guard.

The experience with domestic servants was new to Mother and me. Our relationship with Ali and Merza added much to our appreciation of the Afghan people. One day, on Ali's day off, we took him and his family on a picnic

secluded Moslem way of life until about the age of fourteen. Girls who are fortunate enough to continue their education through high school and university will probably never wear it, Mildred said. I thought, what a privilege education is, especially for women in Afghanistan!

Mixed into the crowds on the streets were men in beards. These were the solemn old Mullahs, religious men of Islam. But not all were Mullahs. I recognized some of the bearded ones to be Western hippies--American, perhaps. Mildred said there was a colony of hippies in Kabul. They looked even more startling here than they do in America.

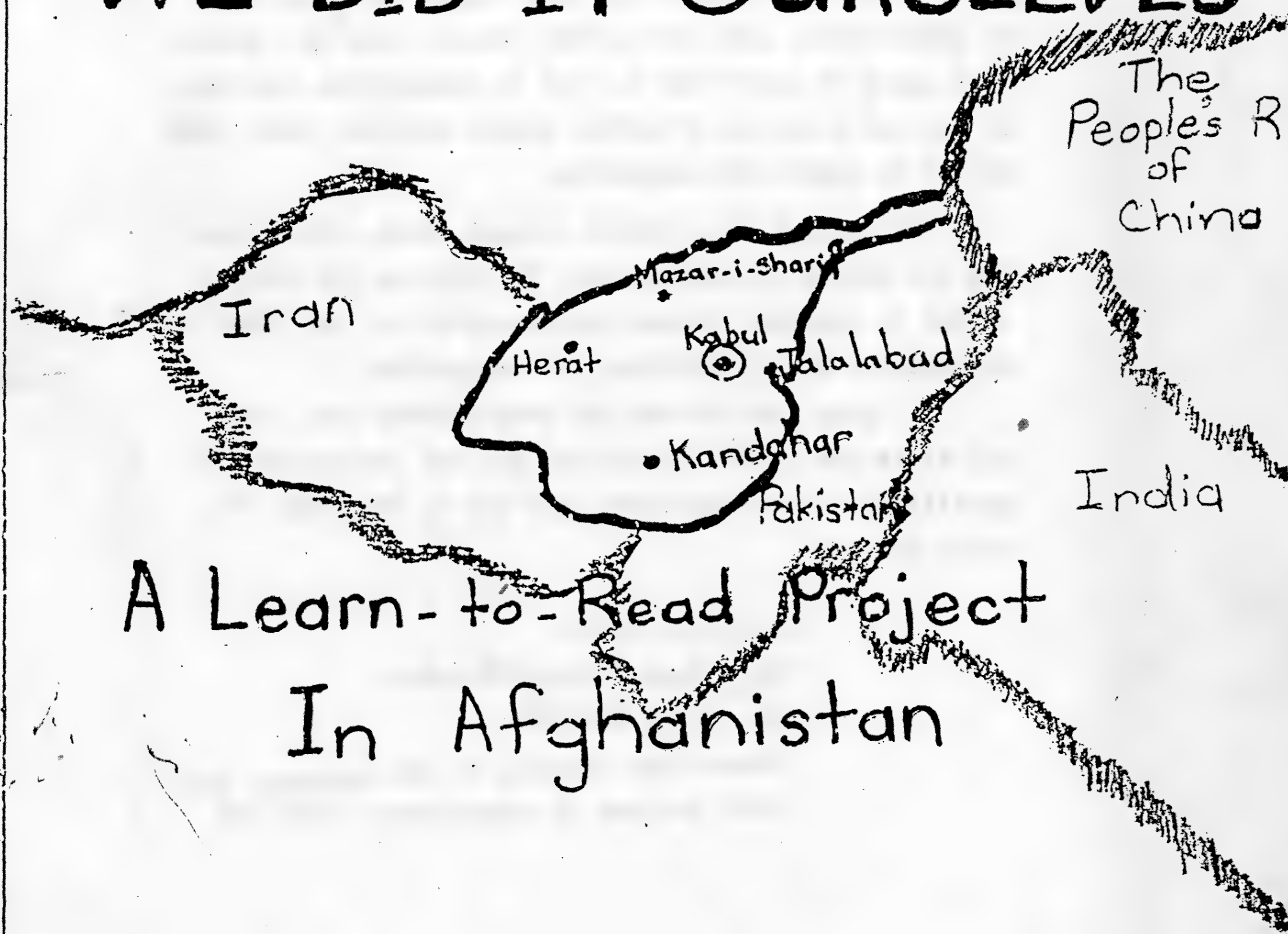
A man on a bicycle in front of us was wearing a sports jacket with PEORIA written on the back. I did not find out until later that one of America's largest exports to Afghanistan is used clothing.

Most homes in Kabul are surrounded by high walls, so as we travelled south of the main part of the city toward what was to be our home in Karte Seh, I had mixed feelings. This was Wonderland for sure and I was afraid of becoming as confused as "Alice."

Our car finally stopped outside a stucco two-story house. The wall around it hid the beautiful lawn and flowers which grew inside. A feeling of security flashed through me when I saw on the garage door, printed in large letters, the word KAUFFMAN. What a thoughtful gesture of the Columbia Team.

As we walked through the gate and up the steps to the front door, an Afghan servant in white trousers met us there. Mildred introduced him as Ali, our cook. "You speak a good English," I said. Ali then showed us through the house. My fears vanished. All was comfortable, beautiful, adequate, even a room for my study upstairs. USAID, responsible for accommodations for Americans who come to serve a Tour of Duty in Afghanistan, must have known the

WE DID IT OURSELVES



A Learn-to-Read Project In Afghanistan

Melva Kauffman

To Dr. Wardak:

I am greatly indebted to Dr. Guljan Wardak for helping me and the TCCU Curriculum Team to make this project of Language Arts a means of promoting universal literacy for Afghanistan. I regret the circumstances that have kept the program from achieving universal literacy throughout the country. It is my daily prayer that something will happen to bring peace to Afghanistan, and that gifted leaders like Dr. Wardak will again be permitted to work in Afghanistan and help to restore a nation of gifted people who will lead their nation to peace and prosperity.

Dr. Wardak is a gifted scholar along with a love for the people in Afghanistan. His willing and gifted effort to promote literacy and peace to all who live in Afghanistan and/or Pakistan is commendable.

I pray for him and his people every day. May God bless the Wardak family and all the people who are privileged to know and work with him in Pakistan. God bless you all.

Sincerely yours,

Melva Kauffman

Dr. Melva Kauffman

Curriculum Director in the Language Arts
TCCU Program in Afghanistan, 1969-"72

This book is dedicated to

Rebecca Roth

Deborah Kauffman Miller

Gloria Kauffman

My nieces who are teachers in the elementary schools of America

Since the time of Socrates, at the very least, it has been a truism that a teacher must start with where his students are if he is to take them somewhere else.

OUTLINE

WE DID IT OURSELVES

OUTLINE

WE DID IT OURSELVES